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Lifecycle 2 Vol2 #4 04/00

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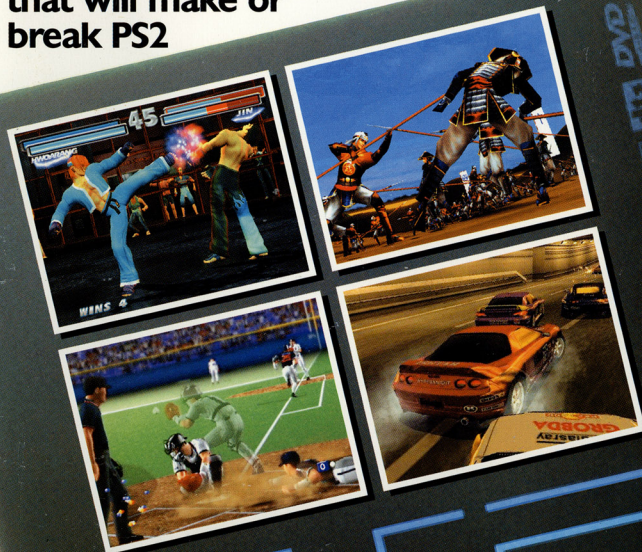
Next Generation Magazine

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

PlayStation2

HANDS-ON REPORT

We playtest 18+ games
that will make or
break PS2



PLUS

- Nintendo 64: Is it dead?
- First looks at Tenchu 2, Tribes 2, Evil Dead
- Reviewed: NHL 2K, Dead or Alive 2, and 23 more

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NextGen

Lifecycle 2 Vol2 #4

Next Generation Magazine

■ PlayStation2 has shipped in Japan, and while we could have made you wait until next issue to bring a report from the show floor in Japan's Mikasa (Japan), we thought we'd do you one better — right the contents of Tokyo's PlayStation Festival 2000 and give you the best.

PlayStation2: Hands-On Report



22. Nintendo Game Boy Advance

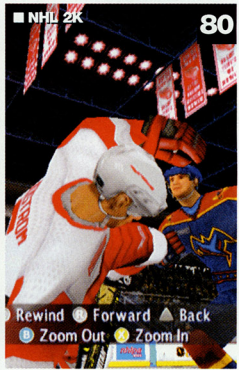
We grabbed PlayStation2 controllers (sometimes from the hands of screaming Japanese kids) to playtest 19 forthcoming PlayStation2 games. Were they everything we hoped them to be? Our report card spreads over the next six pages.



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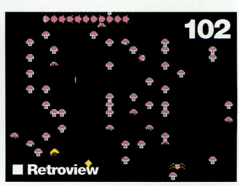
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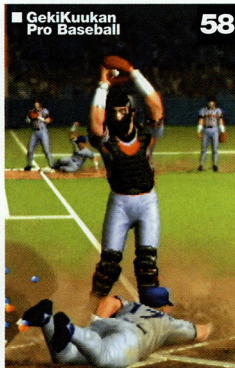
Meet the new boss...



If the first thing you're asking is "Where'd the guy with the glasses go?" you missed Chris Charla's farewell address in the last issue. He's moved up in the world (just down the hall) onto a new project. Certainly not far enough away to get out of the occasional NG assignment, despite all his "new business" obligations. As for me, I've been with Next Generation since the November '96 (NG 23) issue. I remember my first week... founding Editor Neil West grilled Nintendo's Howard Lincoln on the lack of launch titles for N64. Well, time and technology have since changed this industry, and this magazine will continue to change with them. This month, you'll see (or rather, won't see) the Arcadia column. The world of coin-op just isn't exciting enough anymore to warrant the page it is printed on. In its place, we give you more groundbreaking news about X-Box, news you can't find anywhere else — not even on the web. We are heading into the most exciting system race the game industry has ever seen, and the opinions makers make their opinions here, first. So stick around, I've got my own call in to Nintendo.

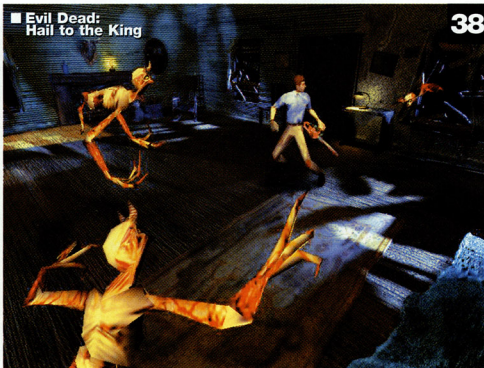
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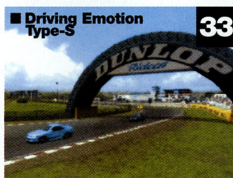
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→ News

Game industry news and analysis



Illustration by David Hutto

Is Nintendo 64 doomed?

➔ It's well known among gamers that Nintendo 64 is facing a crisis of identity and a severe battering to its reputation. But what are the facts behind the apparent demise of the machine that has arguably delivered the greatest gameplay experiences of the past decade?

A recent flurry of poor financial announcements by game publishers was placed squarely at the door of diminishing Nintendo 64 software sales. Game publishers are no longer paying lip service to Nintendo, and are boldly stating plans to cut back on N64 development or even to completely duck out of the market.

Even the rabidly partisan Nintendo 64 web sites have been pumping out stories and rumors of third-party product cancellations since the beginning of the year. Some have been running sad obituaries for the machine, while others are taking the desperately defensive linguistic postures last seen on the web in the days of Sega Saturn's horrendous freefall.

All this serves as a mighty helping of "told-you-so" pie to those who have supported Sony's bid to take over the gaming world, and to those who predicted that Nintendo's decision to eschew CDs in favor of cartridges would cost it dear. But are things really all that bad?

According to the NPD Group, a leading game-industry research firm and publisher of the Toy Retail Sales Tracking (TRST) reports, Nintendo 64 hardware sales dropped by 10 percent in 1999 as compared to 1998. But this was in the year of a successful Dreamcast launch, as well as dropping price dynamics in the 32-bit arena that are bound to favor Sony's cheaper-games PlayStation. Surprisingly, Nintendo 64 software unit sales were actually up two percent year on year — despite a diminishing enthusiasm among third-party publishers, there are still a lot of Nintendo carts (more than likely *Donkey Kong Country* and *Pokémon Stadium*) being sold.

Despite this slightly encouraging perspective, NPD's Leisure President Ed Roth sounds a note of caution: "Although the overall numbers show an increase for the year, the same month-versus-month figures against a year ago are showing a decline towards the last months of 1999." The conclusion appears to be that, yes,

Publishers point the finger; developers desert platform; but is it really the end already?

we are seeing a pattern of decline emerging, but certainly not a freefall.

What about those third-party publishers that appear to be deserting Nintendo for the promise of PlayStation2 and the apparent success of Dreamcast? Acclaim Co-Chairman and CEO Greg Fischbach told investors, "Christmas was a little softer than we anticipated. Sales of N64 hardware and software were impact-

ed by the success of Dreamcast." He added, "We have eliminated certain N64 titles from our release schedule, and have lowered our forecast for the release titles." Acclaim is sticking to four sports titles and one last *Turok* game this year before dropping out for good. In the first fiscal quarter of 1999, Nintendo 64 made up 60% of Acclaim's publishing revenues. One year later, that figure has dropped

WHAT IS IT?

■ This puzzler from Activision is played with traditional mah-jongg tiles

A recent flurry of poor financial announcements by game publishers was placed squarely at the door of diminishing Nintendo 64 software sales



■ Acclaim's Greg Fischbach

"Sales of N64 hardware and software were impacted by the success of Dreamcast"

"It will be a difficult year for Nintendo. But Nintendo is an expert at squeezing out every last ounce from its markets" — Ed Roth, NPD Group

alarmingly to 28%, replaced by a higher PlayStation share and the emergence of Dreamcast. While it's clear Acclaim had problems moving N64 titles this holiday season, it should come as no surprise to avid N64 gamers who were less than impressed with releases such as *Armored Core* and *Turok: Rage Wars*.

Even Electronic Arts, the world's largest third-party publisher, reported that while Nintendo 64 sales were "flat," those for PlayStation were up 31%. In its statement, EA was able to make some positive assessment of every area of its activity, even mentioning the success of Dreamcast, a platform it has yet to embrace. But there were no celebrations about Nintendo 64, just a thinly veiled reference to "softness in some

parts of the market," by Chairman Larry Probst.

There is an argument that the emergence of Dreamcast has hurt Nintendo 64 more than it has PlayStation. It's not backed by any firm data, but a belief runs through game development circles that Nintendo has a higher proportion of die-hard game fanatics among its user-ranks than the more mass-market PlayStation, and is therefore likely to be harder hit by a high-end console launch such as Dreamcast. This is practically confirmed by national retail chains such as Best Buy and Target, which have been offering sale prices on Nintendo 64. Currently Nintendo's suggested retail price is \$99, yet some stores were selling the system as low as \$79.99. Best Buy has offered the system (with one controller) at \$89.99 since November of 1999, and plans to do so until the first of April.

PC Data's stats give Nintendo 64's software unit shares a healthy 20-30% for every month in 1998. By early- to mid-1999, that figure had dropped through the 20% mark and into the high teens. When Dreamcast arrived, N64's share plummeted to a wobbly 15%.

Even loyalist sites have not been afraid to level criticism at Nintendo or to evaluate the console's chances in reasoned terms. Matt Casamassina,



■ Nintendo's failure to bring the 64DD expansion to market certainly hasn't helped the system. More than likely, though, anything less than a CD drive with major third-party support wouldn't really have made a difference

Next Generation's Dolphin Watch columnist and editor in chief of the popular Nintendo web site IGN64, believes third parties are looking for a scapegoat for their own inadequacies. "This is basically just the third parties covering their asses to investors," Casamassina says. "A lot of the stuff they released was just crap — it's not going to sell. If you're looking at the life cycle of N64, how many great third-party titles have there been? You've had probably about a dozen, compared to all the great games that are first- and second-party."

Casamassina points out that publishers are cutting back on all fading generation development, including PlayStation. But Nintendo 64 will take the brunt of cutbacks because of its riskier cartridge-based business model and because of the comparative strength of Nintendo's own products.

For Nintendo 64 owners, the message seems to be that it's not quite time to slam their machines into the next garage sale. While the cancellation of games like Ubi Soft's *Hype: The Time Quest* and Kalisto's *Nightmare Creatures 2* grabs headlines, the actual roster of releases for N64 this year is strong. *Perfect Dark*, *Banjo-Toonie*, *Zelda: The Mask of Mudala*, *Turok 3*, *BioHazard Zero*, and *Conker's Bad Fur Day* are just 10 percent of the estimated US N64 releases slated for this year. N64 will have a pretty good holiday season in 2000, largely due to first-party blockbusters. But these are titles that have been in development for a while. Clearly, developer support for the system has otherwise dried up. It's this lack of support, which isn't immediately visible, that is like a cancer slowly killing the system from the inside.

Even if third parties have often disappointed on Nintendo 64, Nintendo's own reputation for excellence in supporting its own platforms is formidable. Ed Roth points out, "It's hard to believe that the decline won't continue this year. It will be a difficult year for Nintendo. But Nintendo is an expert at squeezing out every last ounce from its markets. There will still be lots of hardware and software sales this year."

That said, the arrival of PlayStation2 later this year will present Nintendo 64 with yet another body blow. Traditionally, those machines at the bottom end of the food chain fare worst when a new power arrives on the scene. We're quite aware Nintendo's first-party support will carry the system to the end of the year — with what will inevitably be some fine releases. But when third-party support begins to disappear, as it is now, no one can argue that the first nail has been hammered into the system's coffin. — Colin Campbell

IT IS...

■ Shanghai

■ COUNTDOWN HALTED...

PS2 Delayed in US?

Can a system without a release date even be delayed? Read on...

Although Sony has resolutely refused to divulge a US release date for PlayStation2, recent rumblings in the industry have convinced **Next Generation** that whatever the original internal date was, it's slipped.

"Obviously, September seems like it's the obvious date," says a high-placed source at a large PlayStation third-party publisher, "but it doesn't look like Sony can make it." Other sources report the ship date slipping from September to October, and now, early- to mid-November.

While Sony could ship PlayStation2 on Dec. 24 and still make its pre-sell sales targets, the later the system is released, the fewer casual buyers it

will attract. A delay is also a boon for Sega, which could be underselling PS2 by as much as \$150 by the launch date.

Third parties, many of whom have "bet the farm" on PlayStation2, could be killed if PS2 slips past this holiday season, and **NG** has already heard about PS2 projects being put on hold until 2001 in favor of Dreamcast or PC development. If the system slips too far, more developers could bolt, giving Sony less ammunition to fight Dreamcast, Dolphin, and X-Box throughout 2001.

Can a system with no release date be delayed? Maybe not. But it can come out too late.

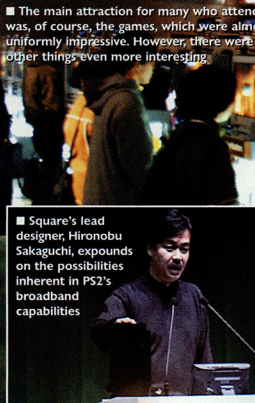
— Chris Charla

Square Millennium

— an event to be reckoned with

■ The main attraction for many who attended was, of course, the games, which were almost uniformly impressive. However, there were other things even more interesting.

■ Square's lead designer, Hironobu Sakaguchi, expounds on the possibilities inherent in PS2's broadband capabilities



➔ In late January, Square held a convention in Yokohama, Japan, to show off all its latest games, including many PlayStation2 titles.

Company execs also made a series of announcements that could, in all seriousness, change the world as we know it.

First, the games: Square showed off the latest versions of its highly anticipated PlayStation2 titles, including *Driving*



■ On the game side, the biggest announcement concerned the release of the next three (count 'em, three) *Final Fantasy* titles — and that *FFXI* will be online only

Japan's überdeveloper announces more than the next three *Final Fantasy* games

Emotion Type-S, *GekiKuukan Pro Baseball*, *All-Star Wrestling*, and *The Bouncer*. As we've come to expect from Square, without exception every game sported terrific graphics at the very least. *Pro Baseball* featured some of the most

realistic-looking motion we've ever seen in a sports title, and *The Bouncer* continues to look like it could be the most impressive game in PS2's early lineup.

Square also made announcements about the *Final Fantasy* franchise, showing off more of *FFIX*, due out in Japan for the original PlayStation sometime this summer. In fact, *FFIX* uses exactly the same engine (and graphics libraries) as *FFVIII*, but with a new story and a more fantasy-oriented design. *FFIX* will be for PS2, however, and uses Square's first-ever realtime 3D engine, viewed from a third-person (and vaguely *Zelda*-like) perspective.

Final Fantasy XI, however, is a very different animal: essentially, it's a massively multiplayer, online-only version of *FFIX*'s world, using the PS2's broadband capabilities — think of *EverQuest* set in a *Final Fantasy* universe and you get the idea.

■ Square's PlayOnline Internet interface offers features such as chat, music, and sports information. The ambitious *Project: Real World* will offer even more



This neatly segues into the message Square was truly interested in pushing: its commitment to expanding the possibilities of communication via the Internet.

The tip of the iceberg for this is PlayOnline, a series of front-end applications for use with PS2. Much like AOL, PlayOnline offers such features as chat and Internet access, plus areas for downloading music, viewing manga comic books, and checking the latest sports updates. PlayOnline will also offer expansion packs, upgrades, and strategy guides for Square games, including *FFIX* and *XI*. Members who log on can switch seamlessly between applications, and keep up with other members via messaging services, even from within *FFXI*.

However, this is only the first step in what Square is calling *Project: Real World*, a highly ambitious undertaking that seeks to do nothing less than unite the planet. The plan is to create a complete virtual world — not a massively multiplayer game, but an actual, fully functioning world, providing everything from entertainment to business meetings.

It can do this because *Project: Real World* is designed to offer instant translation from one language to another, making it possible for someone sitting in Boise to communicate effortlessly with someone in Tokyo... or Berlin, or Paris, or well, you get the idea. If successful, this could shrink the world faster than you can say Tifa Lockheart.

Although the translator is text-based, this could easily be applied to, for example, closed captioning, either in a presentation or an entertainment broadcast. The implications for such heavy-duty applications as business communications are staggering, but even the trivial possibilities boggle the mind. Upset because your local station quit carrying the subtitled *Iron Chef*? No problem — tune into the original broadcast with instantly translated captioning, and while you're watching, chat with viewers in Japan.

In a certain sense, the games were the least important thing Square announced at its Millennium event. Still, we can't wait for *The Bouncer*.

— Jeff Lundgrin

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

News Bytes

➔ **Groundhog's Day** came and went, and for the average person, it meant six more weeks of winter. But for the game industry, Groundhog's Day is an even grimmer time — the February omen falls during the week after holiday sales results are reported, results that determine whether industry executives get to keep their jobs. This year when the little varmint spotted his own shadow — carnage ensued. **Infogrames, having successfully continued its "Let's Buy Every Foundering Game Publisher in America!" program**, has failed to

implement its "Let's Keep a COO For More Than Three Months!" initiative. After Infogrames North America's COO Jim Barnett departed for greener pastures, the company called on its Jedi Master of Marketing, Stan Roach, to fill his shoes. Roach and Infogrames have now parted ways. **Mattel, right after bringing in Bernie Stolar** to head up its Learning Company division, said sayonara to its capo tutti di capo, Jill E. Barad. This came swiftly on the heels of the company's third-quarter financials, and its announcement that the Learning Company division had lost \$105 million in three months. The

loss had investors crying for blood in upper management, but Barad remained defiant. "In terms of management changes, there are none and I will not speak of any today," she proclaimed in a conference call with reporters. Apparently, the board of directors had different plans. **And the development world was shaken this February** with the split of its most successful pairing, Brian Reynolds, Sid Meier's development partner for *Civilization II* and *Alpha Centauri*, and vice president of Firaxis games, has left the building. Firaxis is not commenting on the reasons behind

Reynolds' departure, nor was any information available at press time as to where Reynolds will end up. Meier's only comment was "Brian is a talented designer and we wish him well." **With its stock at an all-time low**, 3Dfx took some desperate measures. With a new CEO, Alex Leupp, replacing the recently departed Greg Ballard (read last month's News Bytes for more), the company cut twenty percent of its staff with the spin-off of its Special Technologies Group. The goal, according to Leupp, is to return the company to profitability. **And speaking of desperate struggles**, Hasbro has

Dolphin Watch

Nintendo still claims to be launching Dolphin in 2000 — but even company insiders have told NG it just isn't going to happen

→ PlayStation2 is out in Japan, and Nintendo is sticking to its guns. The company's next-generation phantom system, Dolphin, has not been shown in physical form, no software has been presented and, in fact, only a handful of supporters outside of

Nintendo itself have been named. But this doesn't faze the Big N. The console will enjoy a "worldwide launch at the end of the year 2000," said former NOA chairman Howard Lincoln at last year's E3, and Nintendo has yet to budge from this position. The company might very well need to

slip its next-generation machine into the Japanese market before the end of the year if it is to compete with PlayStation2 (which is also a system that may not hit the US as soon as everyone expects — see news story, page 08).

However, even trusted NOA

insiders have told **Next Generation** that a US launch in the year 2000 is about as likely as Carrot Top pulling in an Academy Award.

So without further ado, here are the top five reasons that Nintendo's Dolphin will not ship in the US this year.

The top 5 reasons why Dolphin will not ship in the US this year:

5. THE 2000 LINEUP FOR N64 IS STRONG

By Nintendo of America's own admission, its plans would confuse (not to mention water down) the marketplace by introducing the Dolphin system at the end of the year, the same time period the company will launch its greatest Nintendo 64 lineup to date. *Legend of Zelda: The Mask of Majula*, *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, *Mickey's Speedway USA*, *Eternal Darkness*, and the next *Star Wars* game from LucasArts top the list of software planned for the holiday season. Are we to believe that Nintendo will willingly position *Zelda* against its next-generation hardware at launch?

4. GAME BOY ADVANCE THIS YEAR

While Game Boy Advance hits Japan this August (giving NCL more time than needed to debut Dolphin at the end of the year), the next-generation Nintendo handheld doesn't hit the US market until the first of November. Nintendo of America, if nothing else, is a marketing powerhouse, known for delaying its software months simply so that it'll be in a position to sell well. Is this same company going launch Game Boy Advance and Dolphin — two major machines with huge selling

potential — side-by-side this holiday season? Not a chance.

3. SECOND PARTIES AREN'T READY

Perhaps most telling of all is the fact that Nintendo's own second parties have only just begun developing Dolphin software. Developer NST (NOA's internal studio) recently admitted that its first Dolphin game is still in a baby stage. "We just started the game a few months ago, and it's very early," said company founder Claude Comair. "But the technology [for the title] is pretty much there." Technology or no, next-generation software takes time, and second parties just don't have it. Moreover, if Nintendo's own development house isn't ready to deliver games for a 2000 launch, what does this say for the rest of the Dolphin's elite (and slim) list of backers, including Left Field Studios, Retro Studios, Rareware Ltd., and Factor 5?

2. THIRD PARTIES HAVEN'T GOT KITS

Third-party development, meanwhile, is still a pipe dream. As of press time, no third parties in the US are in possession of Dolphin development kits and most won't have them for at least another few months. Acclaim has already

come out and said it plans to back the system with titles ready at launch, but it has no Dolphin software scheduled until at least 2001. It isn't difficult to put the clues together.

1. NINTENDO'S TRACK RECORD

Traditionally speaking, Nintendo is all too familiar with software and hardware delays. Nintendo 64 didn't launch on time despite the company's official reassurance that it would. And just about every major title in the company's 64-bit library has been delayed at one time or another. Even Rare's highly anticipated *Perfect Dark*, which was delayed from its initial December release to April 10, has been pushed back until May 22.

The simple reality of the situation is that a Dolphin delay to 2001 is coming — a logical look at the facts says as much. We know it, you know it, and Nintendo most certainly knows it. As of press time, they sure as hell haven't admitted it. Politics no doubt prevent the company from coming right out and saying it, of course, but sooner or later the Big N is going to have to bite the bullet and make it official. — Matt Casamassina, ign64.com

announced that after 20 years of clones, knock-offs, and reproductions, it's going to crack down on games that mimic classic Atari titles such as *Missile Command*, *Centipede*, and *Asteroids*. The company is also going after games that are similar to *Tetris* and *Pac-Man*. News Bytes estimates that, including shareware, there are over 1,000 games that are imitations of one of Hasbro's properties thanks to its acquisition of the Atari library of intellectual properties. **Poor old Sony has been awash in rumors and speculation** about its PlayStation2. After some Japanese web site run by an otaku living in his mother's base-

ment reported that PlayStation2 won't actually play DVD movies, a number of respectable news agencies leapt on the story. "PlayStation2 SHOCKER!" the headlines blared, only to be followed by retractions the next day, as Sony confirmed, for the eleven-millionth time, that PS2 will play DVD movies. When will they learn? **Sony seized its moment in the rumor hotspot** to issue a leak to Bloomberg, the financial reporting service for people with more money than you. Kenichi Fukunaga told Bloomberg that, well, "Some old software may not work for PlayStation2." According to

Sony, it's the monkeys that program the games who are to blame, as Sony has always insisted games for the PlayStation must be programmed using the machine's proprietary API. In an effort to make games that don't suck, a few of those crazy engineers out there have been known to bypass that directive and program straight to the system's hardware. Sony's execs are speculating that this is the cause for the lack of backwards compatibility on certain titles; a list of titles that will not work properly has not been released. **Nintendo took the Nuremberg Toy**

Fair as an opportunity to put an end to its studious silence on the performance of its Dolphin. Nintendo Europe's Managing Director of Sales & Marketing Axel Herr told reporters at the Fair the new system's Gekko processor, developed by IBM, will be 33% faster than PlayStation2's projected performance. The company also continues to insist that it will release Dolphin worldwide by the end of 2000, though if you're planning a trip to Vegas anytime soon, we don't recommend you bet on it.

— Compiled by Aaron John Loeb, Executive Producer, DailyRadar.com

■ NO X-IT

X-Box tech specs: the real deal?

Our sources blow the lid off Microsoft's top-secret console project

➔ Talk to any top PC developer back in the month of February (as we did), and chances were, they'd had a conversation or two with Microsoft. For several months now, Microsoft has been on an intensive X-Box roadshow that has taken Bill Gates's missionaries to Europe, Japan, and of course, around the US in an attempt to convert the unwashed to the gospel of Windows-based set-top systems.

Fortunately for us, when Microsoft talked, people listened — and we listened to them. We can now confirm the rumor that X-Box will definitely see a 2001 release (not unlike Nintendo's Dolphin, see Dolphin Watch, page 11). Given that X-Box won't see store shelves for at least another year, it's no surprise that the tech specs have been improved. Let's take a look at what's been changed.

First, the CPU. It was originally reported to be an Intel 500 MHz processor, and later an AMD Athlon processor. Currently, sources lead us to believe the system will be powered by an "Intel compatible" 600 MHz processor (AMD's 600 MHz Athlon outperformed Intel's 600 MHz chip, specifically in game-related performance tests.) We asked one inside source at Microsoft, who is very close to the project, to confirm the 600 MHz CPU. "That sounds a little slow to me," the source responded. Given the latest AMD 850 MHz chips cost roughly \$849 apiece in quantities of 1,000 — we don't see how they could get better performance than 600 MHz and keep X-Box affordable. Still, we can't rule out the possibility that a new and cheaper CPU (such as something like Transmeta's Crusoe chip, or another outside contender) might be utilized.

But the real kicker is the custom graphics processor. If the following specs prove true, it is highly unlikely that Nvidia's GeForce chipset will be used for X-Box. Compare GeForce's raw 15 million polys per second against the X-Box specs leaked to **Next Generation**, claiming 100 million polygons per second, and you've got no contest. (PlayStation2's graphic

engine, with all the effects turned on, delivers 16 million polygons per second.) In fact, the current specs are much closer to what's being developed at Santa Clara-based GigaPixel, a company of 40+ engineers, founded by four former Silicon Graphics employees who worked on SGI's Infinite Reality engine.

GigaPixel has developed a processor based on a robust tiling engine, which only draws the pixels visible onscreen, reducing memory overhead and enabling full-scene anti-aliasing by not drawing the polygons that aren't visible. Tiling systems are not new to Microsoft. Microsoft's Talisman project brought tiling into the spotlight back in '96; however, it failed to work with standard 3D APIs, among other problems — problems GigaPixel has fixed. Also, the kind of full-scene anti-aliasing GigaPixel's technology is capable of is perfect for maximizing graphical clarity on standard low-resolution televisions, a feature one source claimed could be found in X-Box's chipset.

So is GigaPixel the company designing the X-Box architecture?

"We have some key partners," says Phil Carmack, GigaPixel's senior vice president. "We're very close to having other very highly visible partners, and we're progressing extremely well with our architecture devices."

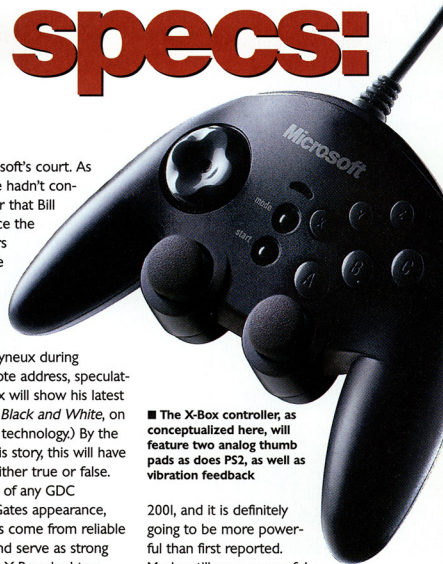
"Unfortunately," chimes in company President and CEO George Haber, "we have no control over their announcement schedules."

Carmack (no relation to Id's famed programmer) explains that the company does have one contract with a PC company, but says that as the marketplace is extremely reactive, hardware manufacturers prefer to take their competitors by surprise. He ought to know, as he was formerly a VP of hardware engineering at 3Dfx, and before that, at 3DO, where he helped develop the graphics for M2. "If this were to end up in a game console," Carmack says of GigaPixel's latest GP-3 technology, "it would be a killer game console."

Once again, that lands the ball

squarely in Microsoft's court. As of press time, we hadn't confirmed the rumor that Bill Gates would grace the Game Developers Conference stage on March 11. (Several web sites had it that Gates would be joining Peter Molyneux during Molyneux's keynote address, speculating that Molyneux will show his latest interactive opus, *Black and White*, on prototype X-Box technology.) By the time you read this story, this will have already proven either true or false.

Yet regardless of any GDC announcement/Gates appearance, these latest specs come from reliable inside sources, and serve as strong testament to any X-Box doubters. We're calling it right now — this system has definitely moved beyond the incubation stage. X-Box is coming in



■ The X-Box controller, as conceptualized here, will feature two analog thumb pads as does PS2, as well as vibration feedback

2001, and it is definitely going to be more powerful than first reported. Maybe still more powerful than what's reported here — all Microsoft has to do is make it official. — Tom Russo

LATEST X-BOX SPECS AT A GLANCE:

- **CPU:**
 - 600 MHz CPU (Intel compatible, likely AMD Athlon)
- **GPU:**
 - Custom 3D graphics processor (likely GigaPixel's next-generation chip design)
 - >200 million polys per second/transform only
 - >100 million polys per second/transform and texture
 - Fill rate >19.6 Gsamples per second/ full-scene anti-aliasing
 - Direct X 8 feature support, including hardware shaders
- **RAM:**
 - 64 MB unified memory architecture
- **OS:**
 - Light OS based on small files for shorter boot period
 - Abstract x86 instruction set enables enhanced memory management
 - Maintaining Win 32 and Direct X APIs for existing PC toolset support
 - Visual Studio development environment
 - Additional debugging and performance testing tools
- **Drives:**
 - DVD-ROM (4x) — DVD movie compatibility
 - 8 Gigabyte hard drive
- **Sound:**
 - Custom 3D audio processor
- **Interfaces:**
 - Four custom game controller ports, two USB ports, two expansion slots
- **Network:**
 - 10/100 Mbps Ethernet
- **Controller:**
 - Two analog thumb pads, eight-way D-pad, six buttons + two triggers, built-in vibration feedback

■ LET'S MAKE A DEAL

New PlayStation Games for \$10?

Sources say they're on the way

→ Ten dollars won't buy you much more than a movie ticket, never mind a brand-spanking-new-release PlayStation game — until now, that is. The standard \$40 PlayStation game price has been shattered, according to several high-ranking sources within Sony's third-party community, who credit Sony with lowering its licensing fees charged to third-party publishers. Sony licensees (such as Capcom and Electronic Arts) were responsible for 82% of the 212 PlayStation titles released last year. It is possible that these and other PlayStation licensees will sell first-run games as low as \$10, beginning as soon as April.

While Sony was unwilling to elaborate on the company's recent discussions with third-party publishers regarding royalties, third-party publishers were willing to discuss the flexibility that will result from the upcoming financial policy. "Sony's new royalty structure would permit a different type of pricing structure than we've had in the past, and we're looking at it as a new marketing tool," says Greg Fischbach, president of Acclaim. While Fischbach believes a broader consumer base can be reached with games priced at \$29.95 or \$24.95, other companies are getting more ambitious. "If you don't see \$10 games in April, you will definitely see them by the holidays," says an inside source at a major videogame publishing company.

Part of the reason behind reduced fees has to do with the medium on which PlayStation games are recorded. While Nintendo game publishers have to account for the hard cartridge costs, raw materials for a PlayStation game are very inexpensive: a jewel case, the instruction manual, and the actual CD-ROM add

Game prices expected to fall with Sony's restructured royalty rates

up to less than \$3. The other components that are added to make up the retail price include R&D costs, profit margin, and Sony's royalty fee. Traditionally, Sony charged third-party publishers a flat-rate licensing fee — as much as \$12 per unit for the rights to sell a PlayStation title. This licensing fee forced publishers to sell games at higher prices to compensate for this fee.

Now, Sony's new royalty structure will be tiered — games released at \$20 won't require as large a royalty as those sold at \$30, enabling publishers to sell games at more consumer-friendly prices while retaining their profit margin. Although it's unlikely publishers will release triple-A titles such as the next *Final Fantasy* or *Resident Evil* installment at a price-point below \$40, consumers should expect to see other new titles at \$29.99, \$24.99, \$19.99, and even the glorious \$9.99 pricepoint.

Why the change in policy now? A high-ranking executive in the games business says this is a carefully-laid-out plan to maximize visibility for Sony. "The six-week lead into E3 sets up the company for announcements that more closely connects Sony to the kids' market," says the source. Another videogame insider not only echoes these sentiments, but reveals that Sony had by far put out the biggest bid for today's hottest children's license: the *Harry Potter* franchise. "Sony is obviously targeting the kids' market, which has traditionally been dominated by Nintendo."

The analyst community predicts a significant impact stemming from

cheaper PlayStation titles, especially low-priced titles aimed at the children's market. Corey Wade, research director for Alexander & Associates, says a reduction in licensing fees by Sony would have a huge impact on the videogame industry. "Lowering its licensing fees will help Sony immensely in maintaining life for its PlayStation. Reduced game prices will help all PlayStation software sales, but provide a more significant boost to kids' titles, similar to what Nintendo experienced with its Super Nintendo Entertainment System. When dealing with an installed base like that of PlayStation, it makes sense to extend the lifecycle as much as possible. There will still be a lot of people who don't run out and buy a PlayStation2 on the first day, and a lot of people who still like their original PlayStation. If this group can buy games at a cheaper price, retailers will move a ton of units, especially during the holidays."

While the impending software price drop is good news for PlayStation owners, **Next Generation** firmly believes that you get what you pay for. To reiterate Wade's point, it's more than likely a \$10 PlayStation game will be a children's title, and if not, something else that probably won't appeal to the **Next Generation** reader. On the upside, more palatable titles should be available in the \$20-\$30 range. With PlayStation currently priced at \$99, and more inexpensive games on the way, the system is certainly a bargain for newcomers to the videogame market. — Kevin Toyama

"If you don't see \$10 games in April, you will definitely see them by the holidays"





■ CARPE DIEM

THQ:

changing with the times

The little-publisher-that-could isn't so little anymore — THQ's top men reveal company plans for PlayStation2, X-Box, Dolphin, and Dreamcast

→ With 20 profitable quarters behind THQ, the prolific wrestling publisher has unquestionably made some smart decisions in this roller-coaster industry. So when the company offered to discuss its strategy going into the next console war — we listened.

"We're actively supporting PlayStation2," says THQ CEO Brian Farrell. "We've already started supporting it, and we're actively developing games."

Farrell is full of hope that *Summerner*, the company's action-RPG for PC, will also be available for PlayStation2 when the system launches, and mentions that the developers of *WWF Smackdown* are now working on a new wrestling title for PlayStation2. "Wrestling will be very close behind *Summerner*," Farrell says, "but it's hard to tell if that will be launch or not."

According to Farrell, one of the

company's other studios, Pacific Coast Power and Light, is also working on PlayStation2 titles that will be available in late 2000 or early 2001.

So what about Dreamcast? Besides the cops-chasing-robbers game *Felony Pursuit* and *Evil Dead*, THQ will release a wrestling game later this year, and it undoubtedly has a few more surprises up its sleeve. While the company may not have jumped feet first into developing for Sega's system, V.P. of Product Development Mike Rubinelli is quick to confirm that THQ is extremely pro-active when it comes to the next-generation consoles, citing a total of 12 projects spread across Dreamcast, PlayStation2, and Dolphin.

On the Nintendo side, though, things are a bit foggy for THQ.

"Dolphin is tough because we don't have any development systems yet," says Farrell, "and it's hard to support a system when there's no development environment."

This confirms what we've already heard from several other developers — still, when Nintendo does ship the development kits, THQ will have the plans already laid for some of the company's strongest franchises. The biggest unanswered question on our lips, however, is that if strong N64 backers like

"When a company with that much money in the bank wants to be successful, you have to sit up and take notice"

— Brian Farrell on Microsoft's X-Box

THQ don't have Dolphin kits, how does Nintendo hope to launch in 2000?

Despite the lack of news from Nintendo, Microsoft remains the elusive player with its still-not-officially-announced console, dubbed X-Box. Rubinelli was able to confirm that THQ is "currently evaluating X-Box," which Farrell confirmed in a separate interview.

"The thing I like about Microsoft," says Farrell, "is that they really seem to be listening to what people are saying about how they should position their product. I don't sense arrogance there; I sense a real commitment to wanting to make it work. If they're going to do it, I think they want to do it right."

When asked if there is room for Microsoft among the crowded console market, Farrell replies, "When a company with that much money in the bank wants to be successful, you have to sit up and take notice."

Even with all this talk of the future, THQ has still pledged to support current-generation systems. Rubinelli

points out that THQ has more PlayStation games coming out this year than last, and Farrell admits that with PlayStation there's "a viable market there for at least two to three years." On the Nintendo side, however, the support will be shaky as Farrell believes the economic model of developing for cartridge makes it tougher to support.

Regardless of the platform, THQ is no longer content to strictly deliver niche licensed products or ports from Japan. The publisher is positioning itself to provide first-rate products with a wider appeal to next-generation audiences.

"We're just evolving," stresses Farrell. "The risks we couldn't take when we were a 50 to 100 million dollar company, we can't afford not to take now that we're a 300 million dollar company."

Recently, THQ formed Heavy Iron, a THQ-owned development house hard at work on *Evil Dead* (take the first look behind the scenes on page 38). While the *Evil Dead* franchise is no *Jurassic Park*, it's a higher-profile license than most in the THQ library. Still, Farrell believes a license can only get you so far without a solid game-play backbone. "We like licenses," Farrell admits, "but we can't just sell the *Evil Dead* game to the cult followers of *Evil Dead*."

Even if they did, THQ would likely find a way to make it profitable.

— Brian Farrell



■ THQ is attempting to have *Summerner* ready for the PS2 launch in the US (PC screens shown)



■ Brian Farrell has led THQ into 20 straight profitable quarters since 1995



"Dolphin is tough because we don't have any development systems yet, and it's hard to support a system when there's no development environment"

NextGen

■ TOM RUSSO'S In the Studio

Development news as it develops

NO FINAL FRONTIER

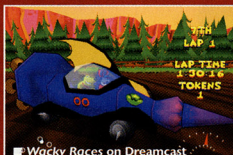
→ The good news: as was correctly predicted last month in this column, the *Final Fantasy* series is going online, and online for PlayStation2 with *Final Fantasy XI* (see news story, page 10). The bad news: one of the first multiplayer, persistent-world games planned for Dreamcast may never see daylight. Sources close to Sega have revealed that the sci-fi universe of *Frontier*, in development at Turbine Games, is on indefinite hold. The problem comes back to the technical hurdles of launching the first online console persistent world — Sega was unwilling to commit the resources to the developer who was going to miss the 2000 holiday season, and Turbine hadn't quite put the effort into developing better rendering technology for Dreamcast than what the company had produced for *Asheron's Call*. As it stands, Turbine has moved on to developing the still-unannounced *Asheron's Call 2* for Microsoft.

PLAYSTATION2 HEATS UP IN THE UK

→ UK publisher Sales Curve Interactive has announced two PlayStation2 titles. *Titanium Angels*, already in development for PC and PlayStation, is a dark, sci-fi, third-person action/adventure game in which the player controls a mech-like vehicle. The second is based on the UK's 1960's children's show titled *Thunderbirds*, a sci-fi spy series that featured puppet characters and model spaceships. The series is being digitally remastered for re-release on Britain's BBC2 network this fall.



■ The stars of *Titanium Angels*



■ Wacky Races on Dreamcast

WACKY DREAMCAST RACING

→ If the *Thunderbirds* (see story above) were too obscure for you, maybe you'll remember the Hanna-Barbera cartoon classic *Wacky Races* — now coming to Dreamcast, PC, and PlayStation this summer. This arcade-style racing game based on the cartoon, features a host of odd characters such as Dick Dastardly and his sidekick dog Muttley, Penelope Pitstop, and (hopefully) the Ant Hill Mob. Publisher Infogrames hopes to bring the "win by any means necessary" spirit of the show to the games; we're hoping they succeed.

DREAMWORKS WILL GO TO EA

→ Just after this issue goes to press, we expect Electronic Arts to announce that it has purchased DreamWorks Interactive from the greater DreamWorks SKG organization. DreamWorks and EA had been in a co-publishing deal, and despite the recent success of *Medal of Honor*, it's no surprise that the Hollywood studio would want to unload its expensive and relatively unsuccessful division to the world's leading third-party publisher. No problem for EA, which will assume complete control over how to develop Spielberg's future intellectual properties.

BASEBALL'S GAME DRAFT 2001

→ Well, it's another year in videogame baseball, and once again, major sporting-game publishers have announced their rosters. Here's the short list of heroes gracing game packaging this year. 3DO has signed Sammy Sosa for its upcoming PlayStation and PC versions of *Sammy Sosa's High Heat Baseball 2001*, while longtime baseball developer EA Sports has acquired Mike Piazza of Mets fame to endorse the *Triple Play* series on PlayStation and PC. Piazza made his box-front debut with GT Interactive in '98, in *Mike Piazza's StrikeZone* for N64, but was picked up by EA after a successful game franchise failed to materialize with the New York-based publisher. Acclaim will once again bring back Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter for the cover of its *N64 All-Star Baseball 2001*. Interestingly, Acclaim may not see any competition from Nintendo this year — with Griffey having parted ways with the Seattle Mariners, is it possible he's parted with Nintendo too? At press time, Nintendo had failed to announce any baseball games for this year. And last, but certainly not least, Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants has agreed to represent Konami in that company's first *ESPN Baseball Tonight* outing for Dreamcast, due in April.

■ Bonds and Piazza — games really are their lives

■ CLASS IS IN

M.I.T. hosts inaugural videogame conference

Game industry All-Stars head to Boston



On the second weekend in February, while basketball's best battled it out in Oakland at the NBA All-Star game, the giants of computer and video game development gathered in Boston for a conference hosted by

M.I.T. Titled "Computer and Video Games Come of Age: A National Conference to Explore the State of an Emerging Entertainment Medium," the meeting was organized by Professor Henry Jenkins, the head of M.I.T.'s Comparative

Media Studies Program, in association with the I.D.S.A. The conference, which was free and open to the public, attracted everyone from M.I.T. undergraduates to educators and journalists the opportunity to exchange ideas with such developers as Gabe Newell, Trip Hawkins, David Perry, and Hal Barwood.

The two-day conference featured sessions on the aesthetics of game design, the role of games in education, interactive storytelling, and even a crowd-pleasing, 30-



■ Valve's Gabe Newell was on hand to discuss the art and science of *Half-Life*



■ No slackers: (from left) Henry Jenkins, Gabe Newell, Greg Smith, Hal Barwood

minute video history of video and PC games. But the session that generated the most discussion was a talk by Professor Geoffrey Goldstein of the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. Goldstein sharply criticized the poor quality of recent psychological studies that claim to establish a connection between violence in videogames and anti-social behavior by game players. One senior game developer, weary of the media's infatuation with violence in games, referred to Goldstein's talk as a refreshing "tonic" for game makers.

But in an industry that many still perceive as a toy business — the five top-selling home games of 1999 were all *Pokémon* — is there really a need for a conference at M.I.T?

"Well, if we look at the origins of cinema," Goldstein told **Next Generation**, "academics have played an important role in educating the public; they helped to provide a buffer against social criticism that rocked the film industry in its early age; and they provided a gateway between the public and the industry, helping them to develop the knowledge and the skills to do well in the industry. And I think the same thing can happen here."

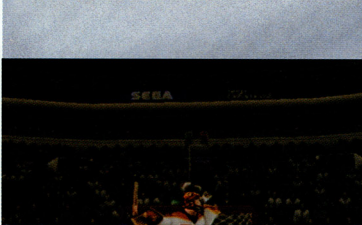
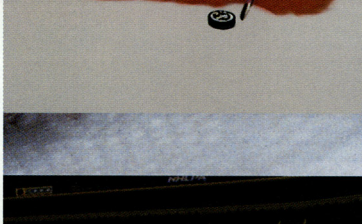
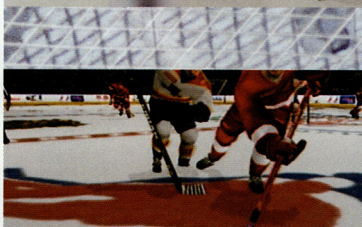
Judging by the reaction of other

developers, Jenkins is not alone in the belief that academics should be more involved in the gaming industry.

"To me, M.I.T. is a place to workshop technology," Peter Molyneux said. "It's got the coolest media lab in the world; the brightest people; and the opportunity to come was just irresistible." Other participants were a little more cautious. Warren Spector, an ex-academic himself, said, "We have to be really careful not to take ourselves too seriously," adding with a smile, "we have to be on our guard not to lose our 'geek roots.'"

The conference was universally regarded as a success by the speakers and audience members we talked to — and judging the by the enormous turnout, even the organizers were a little overwhelmed. But this is the first year for the conference, and novelty alone may have drawn many of the big-name speakers. The real test will come next year as M.I.T. must draw both academics who have largely ignored games, and game developers who have preferred to talk shop at the annual Game Developers Conference. But the beginning was a good one, and when asked if he would return for future conferences, Peter Molyneux immediately responded, "Absolutely!" — Jim Preston

■ Panel discussion: Georgia State University's Greg Smith (center) and LucasArts' Hal Barwood (right) listen as Gabe Newell addresses the importance of storytelling in games



"If you're too lazy to go online and see this awesome game for real, here are some motionless, four color dots on 20lb, recycled paper that do this game no justice whatsoever. Like in frame 3 you can't see that the goalie read you like a trashy novel since you tried your lame-o deke three times already, or that the game has over 1,000 motion captured moves, or that you can make line changes on the fly. Plus this piece of paper can't give you the roar of the crowd when you bury the puck in the net. But then you'd have to bury it in the net wouldn't you, pipeboy? So stop putzing around and see it for real at Sega.com/games.

■ PlayStation2 has shipped in Japan, and while we could have made you wait until next issue to bring a report from the store lines in Japan's Akihabara (boring), we thought we'd do you one better — fight the crowds at Tokyo's PlayStation Festival 2000, just so we could come back and give you the first...

PlayStation2: Hands-On Report



DVD DECODING? TRY THE MATRIX

To demonstrate the quality of Sony's DVD decoding, Sony had the film *The Matrix* running on PS2 at a kiosk. We thought that the video quality was really sharp.



We grabbed PlayStation2 controllers (sometimes from the hands of screaming Japanese kids) to playtest 19 forthcoming PlayStation2 games. Were they everything we hoped them to be? Our report card spreads over the next six pages.

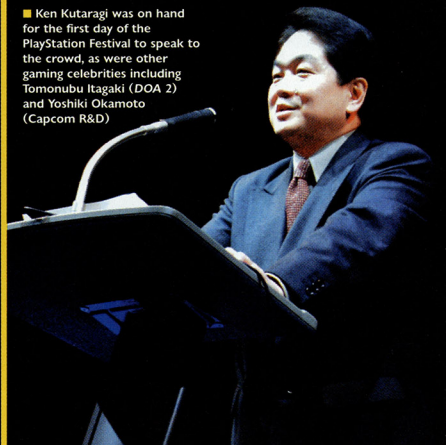
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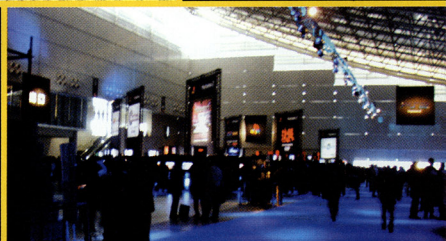
■ PlayStation2 comes with everything you see here: the base unit, hookups and power cable, a dual shock controller, an 8MB memory card, a utility disk that contains demos (possibly games, among other things), the DVD software (which can be put on the memory card), and nifty blue packaging



■ Ken Kutaragi was on hand for the first day of the PlayStation Festival to speak to the crowd, as were other gaming celebrities including Tomonobu Itagaki (DOA 2) and Yoshiki Okamoto (Capcom R&D)



■ Square and Disney held a press conference during the show to announce that they are working together on a Disney RPG to be released in 2001. The game will feature familiar Disney characters as well as original ones created by Nomura Tetsuya of Final Fantasy VII and VIII fame





Ridge Racer 5

■ Publisher: **Namco**
 ■ Developer: **Namco**
 ■ Japan Release: **Launch**

Ridge Racer 5 is all about feel, and in this respect the game delivers what may be the most playable Ridge Racer yet. Hit a corner at high speeds, and experienced players will feel the car drift easily around it, enabling them maximum control at all times. Analog control in particular has been fine-tuned, and is now at least the equal of the digital. Even the dual shock feature is properly done, significantly adding to the feel of the game instead of just angrily buzzing every time you hit a car or wall. Trust us, when you go off your first jump and land and feel the actual shock of the car, you won't believe you're using the same old dual shock

technology.

While we loved Ridge Racer 5, it does have some problems. Namely, it looks too similar to R4. While the graphics have been upgraded and the cars look nice, the track we played at the show felt like old hat. The

graphical upgrades are all there though: trees by the side of the road, detailed cars, and even sparks that fly out when you see a car go over a nasty bump. It's all very subtle. Oh, and there's still some minor graphical pop-up — you'll have to look closely.



THE UNTOUCHABLES

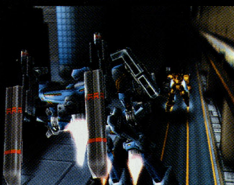
Several games were shown on the video screens in the center of the hall, and unfortunately they weren't playable. Here are some of the more exciting ones.

Dark Cloud



■ Sony's action/RPG could give Zelda a run for its money. Simply beautiful graphics with a new and exciting combat system.

Armored Core 2



■ This game just looks unreal. The mechs are so detailed, you can actually see tiny moving parts!

Dead Or Alive 2

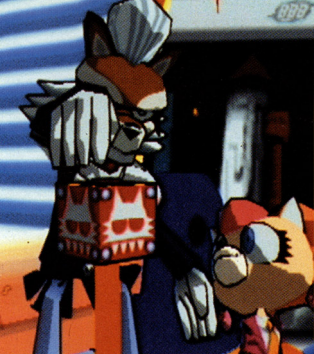


■ This version looks like it will be even more detailed than the Dreamcast game, which just earned 5 stars (review, page 80).

Extermination



■ Think Metal Gear meets The Thing. Some kind of aliens are infecting your arctic base and you must take them out.



Be On Edge

- Publisher: **Sony**
- Developer: **Sony**
- Japan Release: **TBD**

You might not expect it from this bizarre collection of screenshots, but Sony's "surprise of the show" was literally the surprise of the show. Providing a cartoon atmosphere, a unique game premise (something that was very rare at this show), and a perfect blend of creativity and rhythm-action, *Be On Edge* stood out like a shining star.

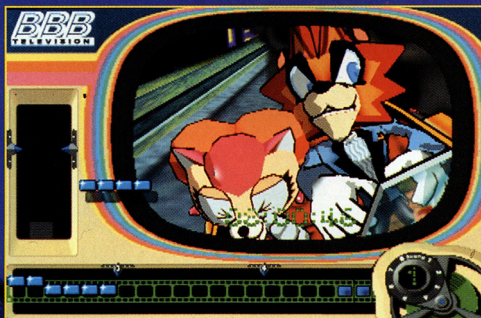
The gameplay is not unlike *PaRappa's*, only now you must hit buttons in time with the rhythm to (get this) edit together scenes of an action movie, which we believe is called "The Codename 777." Each button represents a certain "cut" in the scene and takes a certain amount of time. You must be sure to place your cuts correctly to fit into the allotted time slots, as well as hit the button with the

beat every time a new cut is needed. If you put your scene together well enough, you get to move on, if not, you can try again until time runs out.

The best part about the game was the eclectic mix of cute and

fuzzy animals, John Woo-style action (really!), and raging, grinding techno music, which all combine to make the game feel completely original and highly addictive. The only caveats we have are that the game could

end up being short (as *PaRappa* was), and from a technological standpoint, we don't doubt that this game could easily be done on Dreamcast (or even the original PlayStation in low-res). Still, it's a blast to play.



Gungriffon Blaze



■ All-out mech combat. At points, there are so many vehicles and missiles on the screen that it's incredibly chaotic.

Maxime



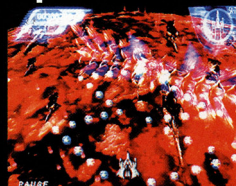
■ Capcom showed off concept art for this game that appears to be a 3D action title set in the *Ghouls and Ghosts* universe.

Onimusha



■ Samurai-meet-*Resident Evil* with some awesome-looking swordplay.

Silpheed 2



■ The sequel to the classic Sega CD and PC shooter.

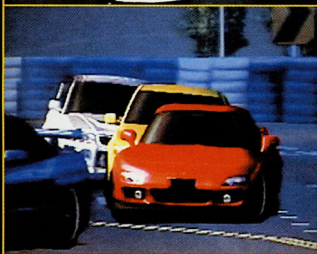


GT 2000

- Publisher: Sony
- Developer: Polyphony Digital
- Japan Release: Spring

GT 2000 looks and plays exactly like you expect it to — great. The version on the show floor enabled you to select your car and then race on a single track. Now, before the critics point out that the game is pretty much GT2 in hi-res, we want to call attention to the very noticeable improvements that PS2 has brought to the table.

First, the game runs at a silky-smooth 60fps, the payoff for players being an excellent sense of speed. The track also featured some nice graphical touches. We raced one course, set amid cityscape at sunset, with the sun sitting low on the horizon. At one point, the sun suddenly reappeared from behind some buildings, momentarily "whiting out" our screen — a far more realistic experience than the generic lens flare still prevalent in many games. On the subject of horizons, the draw distance in GT 2000's world is truly amazing. As far as we could tell, there was zero pop-up. The only graphical problem, perhaps, is that the cars look *too* shiny and boast too many special effects, making them look a bit fake.



Street Fighter EX 3

- Publisher: Capcom
- Developer: Capcom
- Japan Release: Launch

Street Fighter EX 3 looks and plays a lot like EX 2 in high-res. The control is very similar, the animation is familiar (but better), and we've known most of these characters for years. The game now implements 3D backgrounds, yet they are rendered on different field, creating a fairly jarring parallax effect, as if the foreground is on a carousel. One of the main places EX 3 deviates from EX 2 (and really shines) is in the four-player Arena mode and the Tag Battle (where both your characters can be onscreen).

Playing against three other players in the Arena mode was simply superb, if not overwhelming. There are so many effects, sometimes you'll lose track of where they originated. But, as the only fighting game available at launch, this should satisfy.



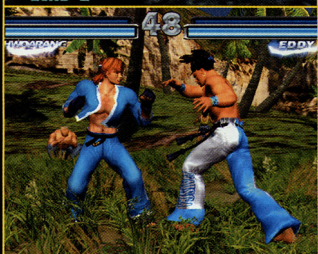
Tekken Tag Tournament

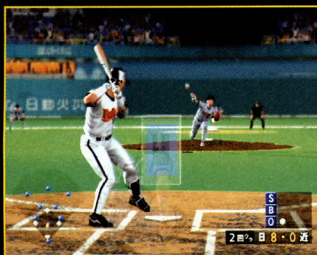
- Publisher: Namco
- Developer: Namco
- Japan Release: March

Simply put, Tekken Tag looks fabulous. The sheer amount of activity in the game's backgrounds is a telling sign that Namco remains master of visuals within the fighting game domain.

But how does it play? Not surprisingly, it feels a lot like the arcade version — only much prettier. Unfortunately, like EX 3, the new 3D backgrounds strangely warp the scenery in this game as well. Luckily, this isn't that noticeable unless you're really looking for it. The characters look particularly nice, and while it might have been our imaginations, the animation seemed a bit more fluid than what we're used to seeing from Tekken.

While the gameplay may not be that original, Tekken Tag still stands as a showcase piece for PlayStation2 on visual merit alone. But the tight, well-tested gameplay is an added plus. Now, with a second-generation PS2 Tekken title to look forward to, we'll see what Namco can really do to push those gameplay boundaries it has established forward a little.



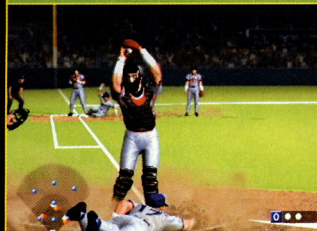


GekiKuukan Pro Baseball

■ Publisher: Square
 ■ Developer: Square
 ■ Japan Release: March

We don't usually beg, but we're begging EA to take this game and bring it to American audiences as *Triple Play* for PS2. We spent a short amount of time playing the game; it played the way baseball ought to, with graphics about 100 times more advanced.

Even better than the graphics, however, are the detailed player animations, which are unrivaled in any other sporting game. You just have to see it to believe it. If this game isn't ported over, we'll still judge other PS2 baseball titles against this beauty.

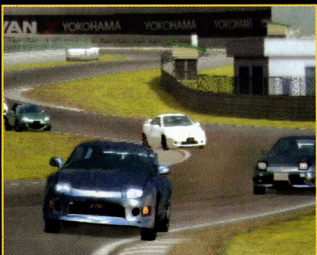
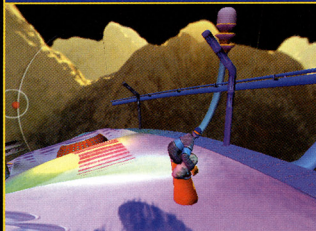


Snowboard Supercross

■ Publisher: EA
 ■ Developer: EA Canada
 ■ Japan Release: March

EA's snowboarding game was the only game developed outside Japan on the snow floor, and not ironically, the least finished. The controls were already in place, yet the graphics seemed to be lacking polish. Besides the slowdown (which an EA representative says will be fixed) the game characters also looked kind of small, although we were also told they are being upgraded as well. That said, the control felt very fluid and the trick system enabled us to pull off a wide variety of moves without too much of a learning curve.

The best part of the game was the "create-your-own" course shortcuts. Because EA mapped an excess of terrain, players can jump fences, go off-course, and explore other parts of the mountain in an effort to shave some seconds off their time. We believe that this is the first game to actually make shortcuts feel like a natural piece of the track design instead of some tacked-on side path. *Supercross* will be coming to the US as a launch title.

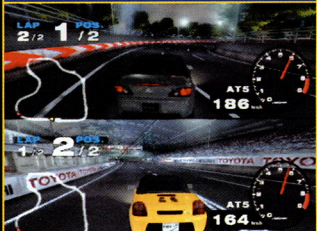


Driving Emotion Type-S

■ Publisher: Square
 ■ Developer: Square
 ■ Japan Release: March

Driving Emotion Type-S was the prettiest racer at the show — especially in the driver's eye view. When you see your hands moving on the wheel while you race (which has been done before, admittedly, but not this nicely), it really gives you the feeling that you are driving the car. While some of the backgrounds were rather plain, others were astoundingly detailed. One in particular had a waterfall that was kicking up mist that, in turn, was refracting a rainbow. A rare moment in this game, but altogether new for a racing title.

Still, this title has a very big problem — it is nearly impossible to drive. Everywhere we looked, people playing this game were gasping in awe at the graphics, and then ping-ponging down the track between the walls on either side. While funny to watch, this is extremely frustrating to the player. If Square can fix these heinous control problems, *Emotion* could be destined for greatness. Since this isn't quite a launch title, there's still time...





Fantavision

- Publisher: **Sony**
- Developer: **Sony**
- Release: **Launch**

This game was hard to fathom in the short time we played it. Essentially, it is a fireworks simulator, in which your goal is to use an onscreen pointer to match fireworks of similar colors and then set them off.

While the game almost seems to be entirely made up of graphical pizzazz, we caught hints of what might become addictive puzzle-like gameplay. Still, until we can really sit down with this title, we can't decide if the game has some uncharted depths, or if, coming from Sony, it is really just a self-indulgent excuse to show off PlayStation2's special effects.



Eternal Ring

- Publisher: **From**
- Developer: **From**
- Japan Release: **Launch**

The first-person RPG has been rather neglected on consoles, and if this is the way the genre makes a comeback, more power to it. Visually, *Eternal Ring* is an enigma. While some areas we saw were absolutely stunning, others were just barren chambers needing work.

Overall, however, the pacing of the game was pretty good, and it will likely offer deep gameplay. There were also some in-game cut scenes that helped build up drama. Our first impression leads us to believe its a solid dungeon crawler that might have legs to stand on if the story lives up to the promising bits we saw.



Kessen

- Publisher: **Koei**
- Developer: **Koei**
- Japan Release: **Launch**

This feudal Japan war sim may have a lot going for it, but we aren't the best position to judge. Unfortunately, our first taste of this game was tainted by the fact that we couldn't really wade through the Japanese menus, so we didn't really get into the meat of the game — or so we hope. What we *could* do was move our armies around, and when they encountered enemy armies, they'd fight in some spectacular realtime sequences. Our favorite moments came when our mounted riders ran down and killed fleeing footmen. It was spectacular to watch, if not particularly interactive.



Golf Paradise

■ Publisher: **T&E Soft**
 ■ Developer: **T&E Soft**
 ■ Japan Release: **March**



■ T&E Soft makes a solid, if visually unimpressive, golf game. The color palette gave this game a *Hot Shots Golf* feel, and the gameplay seemed rather traditional, complete with a swing meter. We did have to admire the swooping camerawork.

American Arcade

■ Publisher: **TBD**
 ■ Developer: **Astroll**
 ■ Japan Release: **TBD**



■ If you're going to make a pinball simulator, at least re-create some *good* tables. While the graphics are cool, the pinball tables we got to play were all very primitive (before LEDs and ramps, etc...). If Astroll was going for a classic pinball motif, fine — but it will have limited appeal.

Stepping Selection

■ Publisher: **Jaleco**
 ■ Developer: **Jaleco**
 ■ Japan Release: **March**



■ Dance on a pad to songs by the Backstreet Boys, Britney Spears, and more. Just your traditional dancing-rhythm fare. Not exactly another PS2 powerhouse. Maybe we'll be lucky and they'll keep this one in Japan.

Love Story

■ Publisher: **Enix**
 ■ Developer: **Enix**
 ■ Japan Release: **TBD**



■ An FMV game with Japanese idols and ghosts! The sight of this game made our blood run cold and brought back painful memories of Sega CD, the exception being that the video is now super sharp.

Drum Mania

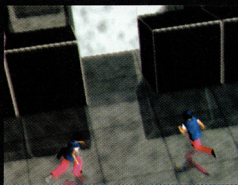
■ Publisher: **Konami**
 ■ Developer: **Konami**
 ■ Japan Release: **Launch**



■ Hmm — take *Beat Mania* and change the controller to a drum pad. Whenever someone on the **Next Generation** staff asks, "Does Konami draw these game ideas out of a hat?" we can only chalk it up to cultural differences.

IQ Remix

■ Publisher: **Sony**
 ■ Developer: **Sony**
 ■ Japan Release: **Spring**



■ We loved *IQ*, and now we can play *IQ Remix* on our \$400 PlayStation2. The differences? High-resolution graphics, a strange silhouette of a person in the background, and lots and lots of motion blur. We consider this to be generally abusing the power of PlayStation2.

Evergrace

■ Publisher: **From**
 ■ Developer: **From**
 ■ Japan Release: **Spring**



■ While we may have gushed over this one in our preview (page 42), in action, this title shows its PlayStation roots. The world may have been upgraded visually, yet it still feels a bit empty and the monsters aren't that impressive. Hopefully these things can be fixed by spring.

Jikkyou World Soccer 2000

■ Publisher: **Konami**
 ■ Developer: **Konami**
 ■ Japan Release: **Spring**



■ While the characters in Konami's soccer game look small, you'll be surprised to see how well this game animates, and how fast it plays. With the usual tight control and some great AI, this could be a winning title for Konami. Hopefully they can touch up the players before release.

WHEN ALL'S SAID AND LAUNCHED...

So after giving what amounts to Japan's PlayStation2 launch library a good going over, what do we make of it? Well, it was pretty much what we expected, despite the fact that none of the games we tested utilized the new pressure-sensitive analog buttons. Otherwise, there were plenty of great visuals for games in established genres, but not much in the

way of innovation. Of course, the Japanese launch library of the original PlayStation wasn't what you'd call fantastic. It wasn't until some months after its US launch that we began to see titles such as *Resident Evil* really showcasing the system's potential.

At this time, PlayStation2 hasn't done anything we haven't anticipated, but it's really too early to

expect something revolutionary, especially from Sony first-party, at launch. (That's a challenge worthy of a select few, specifically Mr. Miyamoto and Nintendo). But is Sony off to a good start? Sure, but we've got a sneaking suspicion we ain't seen nothing yet.

NextGen

→ Alphas

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DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S

- Publisher: **Square**
- Developer: **Escape**
- Release Date: **Spring 2000 (Japan)**
- Origin: **Japan**



We've come to expect certain graphic standards in racing games, but *Type-5* raises the bar considerably. Aside from the classic behind-the-car view seen in all racers (now in hi-res at a jaw-popping 60fps, of course), *Escape* has also added a new "Driver's Eye" view, which has the eyes of the driver (ostensibly



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you) following the track instead of looking just straight ahead. For this feature, the development team had to make sure that they not only modeled the outsides of every car properly, but the inside details as well, since your view will actually turn slightly in anticipation of turns. To make it work as believably as possible, all of the dashboard controls as well as your virtual hands on the wheel (on the right or left side, depending on nationality of the car) will respond to your actions in realtime. If you skid to one side, you will actually see the hands respond as if you were shifting your weight in the seat.

Much like *Gran Turismo*, *Type-S* will feature cars from Japan's automakers: Toyota, Honda, Subaru, Nissan, Mazda, and Mitsubishi. Several upmarket foreign manufacturers will also be included, such as BMW and Ferrari. As has become the tradition

■ Tracks are playable at any time of the day — the lighting and details will change accordingly



Things such as drift and overall handling will be taught by actually drawing the correct racing lines on the ground and challenging players to follow them

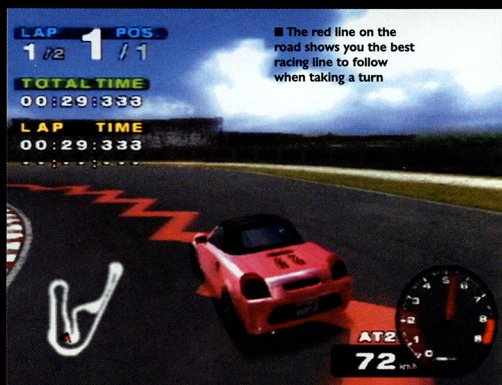
among *GT* racing games, you will be able to customize many aspects of the car for better performance on the track.

Then it's off to the races. Besides

the regular *GT* mode, *Escape* has included a Racing School mode, which will teach newcomers the driving techniques required to win. Things such as drift and overall handling will be taught by actually



■ The Driver's Eye view actually simulates driving more accurately than ever before because you will always be looking down the track — even in sharp turns



■ The red line on the road shows you the best racing line to follow when taking a turn

THE CLOSEST YOU'LL COME TO THE CAR YOU'LL NEVER OWN

While few games let you drive accurately modeled supercars like a Ferrari, only *Type-S* can give you a feel for what it's like to actually be in one. The Driver's Eye view presents an accurately modeled interior that is actually affected by the lights and shadows from the environment outside the car. Is the experience as immersive as driving the real thing? Well, not quite, but it's still a thrill.

drawing the correct racing lines on the ground and challenging players to follow them, complete with pop-up clues indicating when to brake. Also included will be a two-player split screen mode, which, according to Square, will not lose the detail of the single-player game and will maintain the 60fps framerate.

Square has announced that many Japanese circuits will be included in the game including Suzuka and Tsukuba — all reproduced with same exacting detail used in modeling the cars. There should also be a few original circuits that make the final cut, including some European landscapes and some Tokyo highways. As we'll probably see in most games of the 128-bit generation, the time of day is arbitrary, so you can race any location at any time night or day, which should help ease any visual monotony — if that kind of monotony is even possible with the luscious PlayStation2 graphics.

Due for release soon after the PlayStation2 launch, *Type-S* will be



■ In what may be a first for console racing games, the two-player mode will not have to sacrifice either detail or speed

one of the many titles to come out on the older CD format instead of DVD. Regardless, this is a game that racing fans will want to keep on their radar, and with *GT 2000* also right around the corner, Square

and Escape are already racing neck-and-neck against Sony and Polyphony for the right to claim king of the PlayStation2 road. It's going to be a finish that you won't want to miss.

— Christophe Kagotani



■ PC

DEVIL INSIDE

■ Publisher: TBD ■ Developer: Gamesquad ■ Release Date: Spring 2000 (UK) ■ Origin: France

Resident Evil with a live studio audience



Don't let the look fool you: *Devil Inside* is not your normal *Resident Evil* knockoff. The plot revolves around the serial killer Harry Grimes, who, bored with hell, has escaped with 39 of his most twisted friends and moved into a mansion in (where else?) L.A. As Dave Ackland, a journalist whose last job allowed him to flash an L.A.P.D. badge around, you're investigating this mansion for a live cable TV show (hosted by Jack-T-Ripper).

Being part of a televised program throws up interesting gameplay issues. Lose the cameraman who accompanies

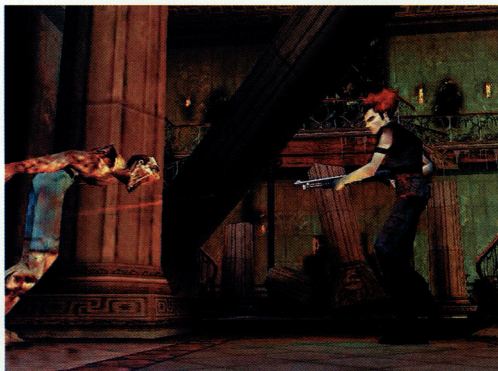
your progress and the satellite link is cut swiftly, followed by a significant dip in viewing figures. Bad news. The audience cheers and boos depending on how successful your zombie slaying is going; the whole thing is wonderfully surreal and atmospheric. Of course, you're not expected to venture into these situations without suitable protection. A variety of weapons, from basic handguns to machine guns, shotguns, crossbows, and more futuristic armaments are made available.

Aiming is achieved via a laser sight — a good thing, since your enemies are

■ Significant parts of zombie anatomy can be blown away before your opponents give up the chase — they'll have to lose their heads for that



■ At points you can change into "Deva," Dave's alter-ego, and send the souls you've found back to hell where they belong



only truly beaten when their heads are shot off their decaying bodies. There are opportunities to change into "Deva," Dave's alter ego, who can fly and fire bolts of energy from her hands. Her task is to trap and send your opponents' souls back to hell. Again, this offers gameplay variety: With around 100 locations to explore (including exterior venues), good camera work (including the obligatory *Matrix*-like panning effect), and surprisingly intuitive controls, *Devil Inside* could be a standout in the great survival horror wars of 2000.

— Nigel Edge

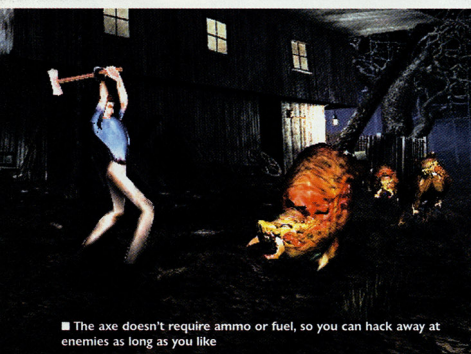
THE DARK ART OF WRITING

Hubert Chardot. You've probably never heard of him, but he's the guy who wrote the first horror series ever, *Alone In The Dark*. Given his lineage as one of the original horror writers, is it really any surprise to see that his newest game, *Devil Inside*, is so gory?

→ Alphas



■ Deadites aren't above talking smack. When you're surrounded by a group, expect them to throw some taunts your way



■ The axe doesn't require ammo or fuel, so you can hack away at enemies as long as you like



■ While there is a lot of action in *Evil Dead*, there are also plenty of puzzles to solve and a deep storyline to uncover

■ DREAMCAST, PLAYSTATION, PC

EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING

■ Publisher: **THQ** ■ Developer: **Heavy Iron Studios**

■ Release Date: **Fall 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

Get ready to kick some Ash



The *Evil Dead* films might as well have been based on a videogame. The heroic Ash can attach a chainsaw to one arm, carry a shotgun in the other hand, and spout off more one-liners than a post-*Commando* Schwarzenegger. This is not the kind of thing Hollywood normally makes unless a hot license is already attached. The glib humor boiling just beneath the surface of the trilogy (*Evil Dead*, *Evil Dead 2*, and *Army of Darkness*) has achieved a legendary status among cult classics. Now, courtesy of THQ and Heavy Iron Studios, Ash and the legions of the undead have been unleashed upon the game world.

The game begins eight years after

Army of Darkness, when Ash returns to the scene of *Evil Dead 2* — the cabin in the woods. Plagued by nightmares he can't explain, he realizes that the Evil has once again infiltrated the world — and only he can stop it.

"The game will include several of the cool elements seen in the films," says Producer Scott Krager, "but will also add to its existing mythos by providing new environments, enemies, characters, and weapons as well as a storyline that continues the saga of Ash and the Necronomicon."

While there is a significant story to follow in the game (it's nearly *Evil Dead 4*), make no mistake about it — your primary mission is to kick some evil butt,

WHAT'S NEXT?

With old movie licenses like *Evil Dead* turning into games, we can't help but wonder what strange B movie will be snatched up next. The one we feel is just begging to be developed is John Carpenter's *They Live*. Imagine playing Rowdy Roddy Piper as you fight in an alleyway for an epic ten minutes until you finally get your opponent to submit and try on the dang sunglasses. The bonus stage! You get to rob a bank, of course.



■ How's this for a one liner: Demon Pork, it's what's for dinner

discover how to shut it down for good (or at least until the next game), and, of course, get the girl. Never forget the mantra: *Good, bad, you're the guy with the gun.*

Great care has been taken to preserve the feel of writer/director Sam Raimi's films. Both Renaissance (Raimi's production company) and Bruce Campbell himself are involved in the project at some level to make sure that it stays true to the feel of the movies.

"In fact," states Krager, "it was the filmmakers [Raimi and Rob Tapert] who wanted to return to the roots of *Evil*

Dead and include the cabin and woods as primary locations." Even the opening movies have been rendered in a very Raimi-esque style and the pre-rendered camera shots used in the game will feature many of the views that the director has become famous for.

With loads of evil creatures and undead apparitions, it seems appropriate that *Evil Dead: Hail to the King* will offer similar stylings as horror-fests such as *Resident Evil* and *Alone in the Dark*, complete with pre-rendered backgrounds and realtime characters. Still,

the comparison seems almost unfair; as the team at Heavy Iron has completely re-thought its way through every aspect of the design. Unlike the developers of the aforementioned series, those at Heavy Iron feel they need not take themselves too seriously when dealing with such campy horror fare. (To this day, we believe that Capcom wasn't trying to be funny with *Resident Evil* dialogue such as "It might be handy if you, the master of unlocking, take it with you"). Add to each area loads of animations (fires flicker, fog drifts in and out) and 24-bit color (a rarity on PlayStation), and this is



■ Skullbats are small, fast, and plentiful. Get used to taking them out with some well aimed shotgun blasts



■ Enemies in *Evil Dead* are anything but standard fare, as you can tell by these demonic hillbillies



→ Alphas



■ Pick the skeleton up on your chainsaw, shoot out your best one-liner, and then throw it down into the dirt. It's enormously satisfying

one of the best looking games of its type.

Aside from the jokes and some new effects, the combat is what's really going to separate this title from the established horror titles.

"The *Evil Dead* movies are full of stylized, fast-paced action punctuated with a great sense of humor," notes Krager. "When evaluating the other survival horror games, we noticed a distinct lack of this style of gameplay."

Because Ash can attach a chainsaw to his arm and swing it about as a weapon, the designers at Heavy Iron felt it would be necessary to give you control of the other arm, which means you can actually wield two weapons at once. You can imagine the grisly scene: Ash with his chainsaw hacking a path through a horde of deadites, shotgun simultaneously blasting.

"When players enter a room and face a deadite, they won't be asking, 'Do I have enough ammo to kill this guy or should I just run?'" proclaims Krager. "Instead they will be faced with the question, 'Should I take this guy down with my chainsaw, two blasts from my shotgun, or maybe a combo using both?'"

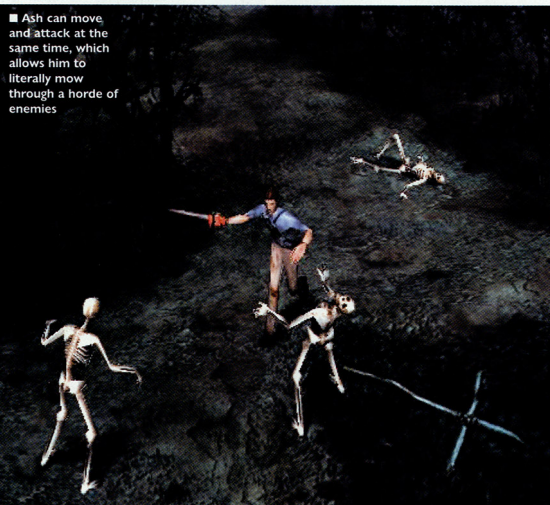
Accentuating the action is a combo system that allows players to pull off more complicated maneuvers in the heat of battle. To reward players for better moves, Ash will utter better one-liners for more complicated kills. There's nothing cooler than immobilizing an enemy by shoving your chainsaw through



■ Enemies each have an assortment of different hit and death animations, so if you take out several at once, they'll all die in different ways

Your primary mission is to kick some evil butt, find out how to shut it down for good and, of course, get the girl

■ Ash can move and attack at the same time, which allows him to literally mow through a horde of enemies





him, shoving your shotgun in his mouth, pausing for a second for dramatic effect, and then uttering "Groovy" before blowing off his head. Make no mistake about it, this game is going to get the M rating.

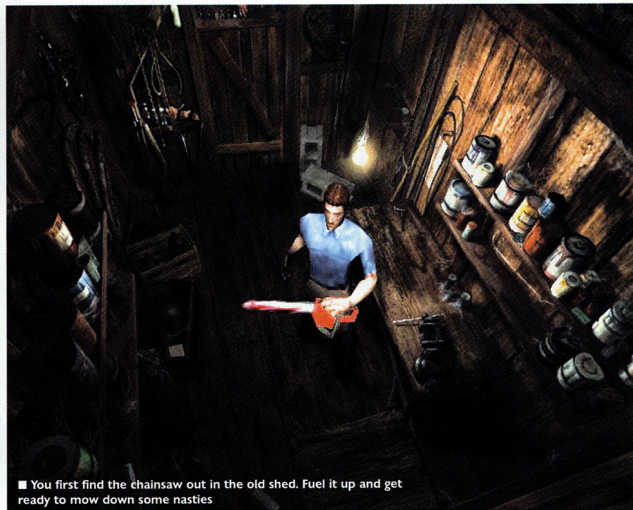
Despite your awesome firepower, the enemies Ash encounters are often more than a match for him. Besides the fact that they can outnumber him on screen by as much as 4-to-1, they are all capable of multiple attacks.

"The game won't be just a string of encounters with slow-moving zombies," says Krager. "The enemies are more varied with respect to look, moves, and personality."

In total, there are over 20 different types of monsters that Ash will need to deal with, including such classics as the deadites and skullbats. New additions include demonic rednecks and what looks like a troop of evil boy-scout creatures. Of course, you can also expect plenty of boss battles to punctuate certain chapters of the storyline.

There are still quite a few months to go before *Evil Dead* hits the shelves, yet already it's looking like Heavy Iron has a title that will not only satisfy fans of the movies, but create an entirely viable new series for gamers to look forward to. Come this fall, Evil better beware.

— Blake Fischer



■ You first find the chainsaw out in the old shed. Fuel it up and get ready to mow down some nasties

■ The game starts off with Ash returning to the cabin from *Evil Dead 2*. Almost immediately, he gets attacked by all sorts of monstrous creatures



→ Alphas



■ While boss characters are nothing new to RPG players, the detail in these bosses is truly staggering. This guy is simply wicked

■ **PLAYSTATION2**

EVERGRACE

■ Publisher: **From Software** ■ Developer: **From Software** ■ Release Date: **Spring 2000 (Japan)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Could this be PlayStation2's answer to *Zelda*?

→ From Software is, out of the starting gate, already one of the most prolific PlayStation2 publishers in Japan. Its latest was originally

slated to be a PlayStation project — a 3D action-RPG called *Evergrace*. Due to some smart thinking and quick project changeovers, the title is now one of

the more promising releases in the PlayStation2 lineup.

The format of the game should make most action-RPG fans feel right at home. The tagline for the game is "Two heroes, two destinies," and at the beginning of the game, you choose to play as one of two heroes: Yuterald (a young man) or Sharuami (a young girl). Depending on



■ Not only do you get to explore a huge outdoor world, but there are also dank dungeons and caverns worthy of adventure



■ Over the course of the game, you will need to equip yourself with items like this frying pan (left) to solve a certain puzzle — or perhaps just whack someone over the head



your choice, the starting point in the game will change, but not the overall storyline. At each save point, in fact, you can switch between characters and continue on.

You'll actually want to change characters, since each has special underlying characteristics that affect how they will perform in different situations. Yuterald's great strength enables him to

wield heavier, more damaging weapons such as swords and axes. He can also wear superior armor types that are unavailable to Sharuami and is more effective in close hand-to-hand action. Sharuami, on the other hand, is the master of lighter, longer-range weaponry such as bows and spears. As she lacks heavy armor, she compensates with far greater magic power that enables her to

strike from a long range, and most of her equipment is based on magic armor and accessories. Yuterald can also use some limited magic, although they are mostly short range and protective spells.

Weapons can be powered up in combat via the power gauge. As in the original *Zelda*, the power gauge is proportional to the life gauge level; if you are weak, the character will not be able

■ Gone are the days of claustrophobic fogging, unless the developers wants it. As a result, the horizon line of *Evergrace* stretches far into the distance



→ Alphas



■ All the little details, such as these accurate shadows and leaves blowing in the wind, bring the *Evergrace* world to life

Dramatic lighting effects are already in place: the leaves on trees filter out the sunlight, and shadows get longer with the setting sun

to perform the most powerful special attacks. The developer is also taking special advantage of the analog buttons: the harder you hit the button, the more damaging the attack, which should add some variety to the traditional tap-tap-tap of hacking one's opponents.

Another departure from traditional RPG style is From's brand-new "dress-up" inventory system. While you can still change your weapons at any time, you

can change your character's armor and items only at save points. This forces you to think much more carefully about what you may encounter in the next leg of the game. Some of the items you'll equip yourself with, such as the frying pan, are decidedly strange, but they are nonetheless vital to solving riddles or getting past obstacles.

When talking about the graphics engine's ability to create a living world, "detailed" is the key word. Effects such as



■ Magic effects look as spectacular as you would expect them to on PlayStation2. Yuterald's magic (above) is almost always used for his protection

light, shadow, and wind are computed in realtime — even the time of day is simulated. Dramatic lighting effects are already in place: the leaves on trees filter out the sunlight, and shadows get longer with the setting sun, adding subtle layers a game that already looks fantastic. As a testament to the raw power of the system, even minute details, such as shadows that bend across objects in their path can be so subtle that casual observers may not even notice. Of course (as we might expect from every game coming after *Shenmue*) leaves and petals are constantly falling and flying under the effect of the game's wind.

Despite its 32-bit origins, *Evergrace* looks to be a fine addition to the growing PlayStation2 library. With several companies going the route of upgrading their projects (most notably this game and Capcom's samurai-meets-survival-horror game *Onimusha*), we have to wonder how long publishers will really consider PlayStation as a viable platform to develop on — backwards compatibility or not. If all the games start looking this good, we won't mind at all.

— Christophe Kagotani



■ Since Sharuumi cannot wear heavy armor or carry giant weapons, she must rely on her magic to keep her safe

→ Alphas

■ Each team in *Tribes 2* has a home base where they can re-arm, re-equip, and set up perimeter defenses in case the enemy gets too close

■ PC

TRIBES 2

■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Developer: **Dynamix** ■ Release Date: **July 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

Attack. Defend. Destroy. Chat

→ The key to the success of the original *Starsiege: Tribes* was that it broke the mold of the traditional first-person shooter. It stressed teamplay in large-scale multiplayer-only games, set in levels that featured both indoor and expansive outdoor components, where players could fly around via vehicles or jetpacks. Now

Dynamix intends to break the mold again. Instead of the class-based gameplay of, say, *Team Fortress*, *Tribes 2* players must create their own class from a variety of three armor types, five pack types, and eight weapons.

"*Tribes 2* doesn't define fixed roles for players," confesses Lead Programmer Mark Frohnmayer, "it lets players evolve new

roles as they advance in skill." With the addition of several new weapons over the ones in the first game (including, among other things, a guided rocket launcher that can be used for air defense), Dynamix is opening the game up even further.

Complementing the already-present air power comes the crucial addition of ground-based vehicles. Expect to assault

THE CONSOLE CONNECTION

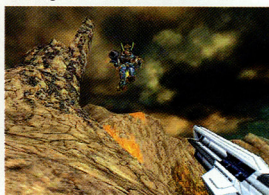
As the next generation of consoles will all feature online capabilities, and with a slew of PC titles making the jump as well, it's natural to hope that *Tribes* will soon be gracing our TVs as well as our computer monitors. When confronted about the possibility of a Dreamcast port, Frohnmayer admits that it is definitely something that the team is considering. The main issue, he believes, is control, which is natural with a keyboard and mouse, but doesn't quite feel natural with today's control pads. Given its great playability at 56K, *Tribes* could be an online showcase for Sega's system. Let's hope Dynamix brings it on over.



...in the new engine also comes far more complex and beautiful architecture



■ *Tribes 2* should provide the same sort of expansive environments seen in the first game, although they have been beefed up to take advantage of the newer hardware cards





■ There are no classes per se in *Tribes 2*, but you can customize your weapons, armor, and other equipment so that they are best suited to your playing style

enemy bases with heavy tanks, carry troops around in the APC, or just four-wheel around the level in the scout ATV. Also adding new levels of both strategy and chaos are computer-controlled player bots designed to help you — or take you out, depending. The single-player game — something the first *Tribes* desperately lacked — uses these bots to flesh out teams for an almost *Quake III Arena* team ladder.

While the single-player game is a welcome addition, the team really concentrated on enhancing the greatest strength of the first game — rock-solid,

team-based, multiplayer gaming.

“We’re really going to push teamplay in *Tribes 2*,” Frohnmayer declares. “We’ve learned a lot, both during the development of *Tribes* and since it’s been out, about how to improve the team aspects of the game.”

One of the biggest changes will be in the commander interface, which will be much more useful than the RTS-influenced screen of the first game, which Frohnmayer admits “doesn’t work well when each unit is really another player in the game.”

Also new this year is the ability to speak with your teammates in realtime (via a headset), which should add another level of combat coordination to the game for teams who take their battles seriously.

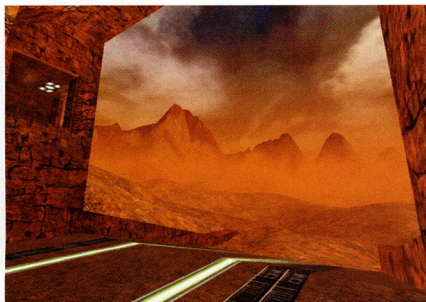
Tribes 2 also benefits by having more game modes than any other FPS. In addition to Capture the Flag, enhanced versions of Defend and Destroy, Find and Retrieve, and normal Deathmatch, there are also several new modes. Among these are Flag Hunters, a variation on the Headhunter mod for *Quake*, and Rabbit, a “smear the guy-with-the-flag type game.” There is one more that Frohnmayer describes as “cool,” but he wouldn’t tell us about as he admits, “we just haven’t come up with a really cool name for it yet.”

With *Halo* and *Team Fortress 2* coming out this year, *Tribes* faces some of the toughest competition of any genre. The bottom line, however, is that while Bungie and Valve are merely putting out their first generation of team-based shooters, Dynamix has a battle-hardened crew with the best network code in the business, and the company already has a good idea of what works and what doesn’t in a virtual battlefield. Come July, Dynamix will invite players onto its futuristic online battlefield so they can judge for themselves.

— Blake Fischer

“*Tribes* doesn’t define fixed roles for players... it lets players evolve new roles as they advance in skill”

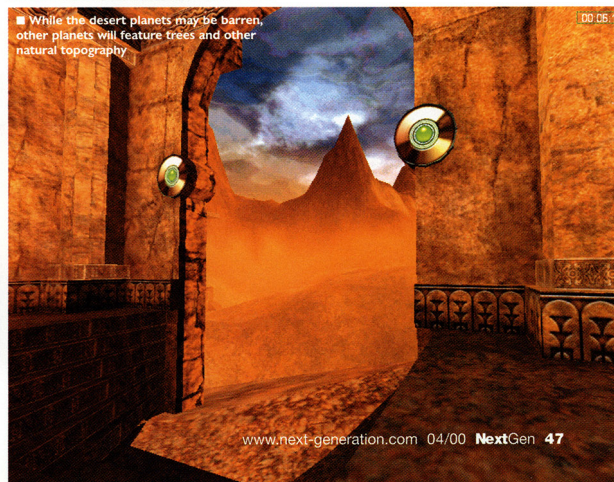
— Mark Frohnmayer, lead programmer



■ The levels really come to life with new effects like rolling clouds and fog that can enshroud an approaching enemy force



■ *Tribes 2* features an improved graphics engine that takes full advantage of today’s high-end graphics hardware



■ While the desert planets may be barren, other planets will feature trees and other natural topography

→ Alphas

■ Combat is an important part of any console RPG, and *Grandia 2* has a fully 3D battle system that looks spectacular

■ DREAMCAST

GRANDIA 2

■ Publisher: **GameArts (Japan), TBD (US)** ■ Developer: **GameArts**

■ Release Date: **Fall 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Will 2000 be the year of the Dreamcast RPG?



Grandia was supposed to be Sega's big *Final Fantasy VII* killer back in the fall of 1997. Unfortunately, while this Saturn RPG was revered by all who played it, it never made the jump to US shores on Saturn, and instead came over as a PlayStation port two years later. History aside, however, the good news is that the team responsible for the first game is working on a sequel for Dreamcast.

Along with an all-new 3D graphics engine, *Grandia 2* promises a deeper and more mature storyline. According to GameArts, 10,000 years have passed since the first conflict and now the

once-defeated evil has somehow returned to haunt the land. This time you take the role of a boy named Rudo who is, of all things, a monster hunter. Accompanied by his friends, Elena, Millenia, and several more he picks up along the way, Rudo must hunt through the continent of Granacliff (and beyond) to once again save the world.

It's your typical RPG plot, but because the first game unfolded with such wit and style, we have high hopes for this one. One of the more interesting things about *Grandia 2* is the combat system — dubbed in traditional Japanese fashion the "Ultimate Action Battle System."

■ Rudo can have up to three other members in his party, each bringing valuable skills and an extra hand to help out in a pinch



■ *Grandia's* world is done with a very hand-drawn look, but the game is actually in full 3D

While it's still traditional RPG turn-based combat, attacks are also plotted based on the distance between your characters and the enemy, another twist on the tried-and-true whack-a-monster format.

Currently, no publisher has announced plans to bring *Grandia 2* to the US, but rumors are already flying. Hopefully, someone will be able to get this game translated for a US release by the holiday season; we don't want to have to wait another two years to experience it on PlayStation2.

— Blake Fischer



■ Huge monsters and flashy special effects. Is this a promising little RPG? Ohhh, yes it is...



■ The *Quake III Arena* engine has been used to excellent effect. The curved surfaces, 32-bit color, and hi-res textures really make you feel like you're in the world of *Star Trek*

THE REAL BORG

Although most people think the term "Borg" is short for cyborg, one theory that has been floating around is that the Borg is named after a college dormitory. Maurice Hurley, the writer who came up with the concept of the Borg, went to Pomona College where a dorm, called Oldenborg, was famous for its maze-like layout and residents who were self-sufficient. Students who went into Oldenborg and never came out were often referred to as "the assimilated."

■ PC

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Raven Software** ■ Release Date: **Spring 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

Screw the Prime Directive — let's kill some aliens!



Here's the good news: you get to take part in a *Star Trek* away team. Here's the bad news:

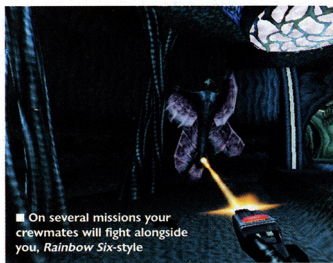
you're wearing a red shirt. As a member of the *Voyager* crew trapped in the Delta quadrant, you get sucked into action when you and the rest of the crew take part in a rescue mission gone awry and end up in a spaceship graveyard under the control of what the developers can only describe as a "sentient presence." From there, you must battle your way

out against the graveyard's less-than-hospitable inhabitants.

The game makes full use of the Q3A engine's brilliant 32-bit color and curved surfaces, but what sets *Elite Force* apart is the deeper gameplay and *Half-Life*-style scripted sequences. These scripted sequences will be more dynamic than what we're used to, however, so players will actually be able to interrupt them and change the course of the game. Associate Producer Steve Ellwell also promises us that our *Elite Force* teammates will be intelligent and responsive, "like playing *Rainbow Six* without having to tell your teammates what to do."

Although details haven't been cemented yet, the final version of *Elite Force* should ship with seven unique weapons (with alt fire), 30 single-player missions, and at least 10 multiplayer maps. Paramount is (once again) providing full support to the game with original voice work from many members of the *Voyager* cast, including Kate Mulgrew, Tim Russ, and the dishy Jeri Ryan. Activision is hoping to get it on shelves this spring, a rather ambitious

■ The spaceship graveyard is inhabited by many different races who scavenge on those unlucky enough to get stuck. Each of these races has its own unique look and feel



■ On several missions your crewmates will fight alongside you, *Rainbow Six*-style



release date. We're hoping that it will take its time with this great-looking game and make it the one rare, must-have *Star Trek* title.
— Jim Preston

■ On Coruscant, you can expect to fight all sorts of alien uglies ripped straight out of the Mos Eisley Cantina scene in *Star Wars*

■ PLAYSTATION2

JEDI POWER BATTLES

■ Publisher: LucasArts ■ Developer: LucasArts ■ Release Date: April 2000 ■ Origin: US

Names not selected for this game included *Double Jedi Dragon*, *Qui-Gon's Final Fight*, and *Coruscant Streets of Rage*

MEESA GONNA DIE!
Let's face it, nobody really likes Jar-Jar. In fact, if you do a quick Internet search, you will find more than 20 sites and a web ring dedicated to hating him. Some of our favorites include: *Die, Jar-Jar Binks, Die!* (www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Heights/5927/jarjar.html), *Jar-Jar Must Die* (www.diediediejarjar.com), and of course the good of 'Jar-Jar Torture engine' (www.hecklers.com/jarjartorture/index.html)



LucasArts has come full circle. After experimenting with every type of gameplay under the sun (with the exception of an RPG), the company has brought *Star Wars* back to its 16-bit roots — albeit with a new enhanced 32-bit look. "It's kind of like the *Super Star Wars* series," explains Production Manager Reeve Thompson. "It's got lots of platform elements, but you also fight lots of weaker enemies on the way to the boss characters."

While the game doesn't stick to *Episode I* precisely, you will be able to choose from five different Jedi including Obi Wan, Qui Gon, Mace Windu, and two other minor Jedi Council members.

■ Each Jedi fighter has Force powers that can help get you out of sticky situations. The best is Mace Windu's, which involves him throwing his lightsaber out and then calling it back to his hand

If you haven't figured it out already, the simple premise involves hacking and slashing your way through levels inspired by the movie. Each fighter has their own assortment of moves and force powers that you use to beat off the hordes of enemies, which include battle droids, sand people, and curiously enough, Jawas. And, while the gameplay may be fun with one player, the game has been designed from the ground up to support two-player simultaneous play, which really

makes it shine. (Of course, you and your friend may have to duke it out beforehand to see who gets to play Mace Windu.)

But upon seeing the game, the main question on our mind was: can we kill Jar-Jar, or at least maim him? "You're not supposed to hit Jar-Jar," chastises Kevin Boyle, associate project leader, "but he does have a full suite of hit reactions." Excellent. He doesn't stand a chance.

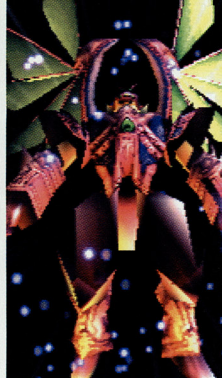
— Blake Fischer

■ When Gungans attack, you have to defend yourself, right? Just don't have too much fun cutting them up, because that's the path to the Dark Side

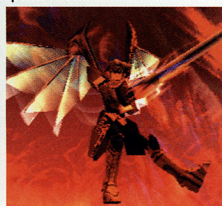




■ Much like the limit breaks in *Final Fantasy*, Dart can only shift to Dragoon mode after he's been in a certain amount of combat



■ Combat in Dragoon form is much different than in human form. Time a button press correctly as a Dragoon, and you will gain access to all sorts of super-powered attacks loaded with special effects



■ PLAYSTATION

LEGEND OF THE DRAGOON

■ Publisher: **Sony** ■ Developer: **Sony** ■ Release Date: **June 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Can Sony steal Square's RPG crown?

→ The obvious quality in every screenshot and movie released of *Legend of the Dragoon* has made the wait almost painful for US RPG fans. Fortunately, the waiting is nearly over. Seeking vengeance for the brutal

slaying of his parents, Dart, the hero, (in typical RPG fashion) gets caught up in an all-encompassing plot that deals with nothing less than the extinction of mankind. Like many console RPGs, *Dragoon* tells a familiar coming-of-age

story, yet the beautiful artwork found within the high-quality graphics marks it as a step forward for 32-bit games.

Further distinguishing *Legend of the Dragoon* is the combat system. Although battles are still turn-based, Sony spices it up with a new interactive feature. After choosing to attack, you must time button presses to an onscreen display. For each well-timed match, another hit will be added to your attack, enabling you to rack up some massive combos. When the expert timing of well-trained gamers isn't enough to save the world, however, Dart can also transform into an armored Dragoon (see sidebar) with vast wings and superior magic. In this new form, Dart's awesome powers usually make short work of any enemies.

Sounds impressive, but with pre-rendered backgrounds, big-headed heroes, and spiky hair thrown in the mix, we have to ask if you've had enough RPGs from the *Final Fantasy* school of thought? With *FFVIII* topping out the sales charts, we doubt it. Come June, Sony may have itself the next RPG blockbuster. — Daniel Erickson

DRAGOONS?

The story goes something like this: The human race was the 106th species to come about in the world of the game, but they are being superseded by the 107th, a breed of evil winged creatures. Somehow, however, (being a wily species) the humans manage to figure out a way to meld with the 105th race, the dragons, and can take on the form of a "Dragoon."



■ The pre-rendered backgrounds are beautifully done and add loads of personality to the game's world



■ Once again, turn-based combat enables highly detailed characters during the battle scenes



■ A Victorian backdrop gives the game a dark and creepy mood, while the cast of outlandish enemies and antics give the game its sense of humor



■ PLAYSTATION

MEDIEVIL 2

■ Publisher: SCEA ■ Developer: SCEA ■ Release Date: May 2000 ■ Origin: UK

500 years later and the dead are still restless

→ Released at the end of 1998, *Medievil's* Ghosts 'n' Goblins-like gameplay placed you in the role of undead hero Sir Daniel Fortesque as he battled a dark-age sorcerer named Zarok and his army of re-animated zombies. The gameplay was typical third-person arcade adventure fare: players explored levels, picking up new weapons, fighting ridiculous monsters, and solving the odd puzzle. Here, though, the control

system actually worked, and big monsters were well put-together.

For the sequel, the action moves forward 500 years to a foggy Victorian London, split into 17 free-roaming levels that are filled with familiar landmarks such as Kew Gardens and Greenwich docks. This time the enemy is a magician, Lord Palethorne, who has discovered Zarok's monster-awakening spell. He sets off to take over the world with a vast army of assorted demons, imps and fat bearded women. (There's nothing more likely to sell a game than the promise of hirsute ladies.)

As for new stuff, you're promised a familiar assortment. There is apparently more character interaction, lots of new weapons (including broadswords, axes, and a Gatling gun), and larger maps to explore. There are also several different versions of the lead character to control, including DanHand, HeadlessDan, and Dankenstein. Each one has its own strengths, weaknesses, and roles in the puzzle-centered gameplay. Mostly, though,



■ Enemies range from living museum exhibits to giant walking plants. All are well crafted

Sony is pushing the "deep, involving, and humorous storyline" and wacky nature of the baddies as the game's key assets.

The gothic scenery, vaguely endearing lead character, and some well-drawn enemies should be enough to draw back fans of the original, while everyone else will want to see more of the apparently deep story, the stimulating puzzles, and the non-linear levels. The market is flooded with similar titles, but this could be close enough to the likes of *Zelda* to make a real difference. — Nigel Edge



■ As has become the standard, there are also plenty of mini-games that must be completed to solve certain puzzles. Think of this one as Rock 'em Sock 'em undead monsters



→ Alphas

19

■ PlayStation's eight-button control scheme allows players to pull off more complicated maneuvers like this spectacular jumping goal shot



■ PLAYSTATION

SPEEDBALL 2100

■ Publisher: **Empire Interactive** ■ Developer: **Bitmap Brothers** ■ Release Date: **TBA** ■ Origin: **UK**

In the future — sports really hurt

→ The US never really saw the first *Speedball*, released in Europe in 1989 on Amiga and Atari ST, but the sequel's release for 16-bit Genesis in 1990 remains a cult favorite. Still, it's entirely possible you never played the original two *Speedball* games, which is too bad, since their unique combination of brutal violence and team-sports gameplay remains to this day the most playable example of the futuristic sporting genre they helped to pioneer. The

smooth control and team dynamics of those early titles is one of the reasons why Bitmap Brothers is trying not to deviate too much from the formula.

"Although the graphics were stunning, the success of the original *Speedball* titles predominantly came down to the fact they were incredibly playable games," says

CUSTOMIZE!

Bitmap Brothers understands that players like to have unique teams. To wit, players can customize team logos as well as the names and looks of individual players. After you build them up at home in some single-player action, you can save your team to a memory card for competition against your friends' teams.



■ You can bounce the ball off the wall targets for more points while you race to the enemy's goal



■ Drive those poor suckers into the corners, then slap 'em down like the dogs they are and don't let 'em up again. Yeah, that's the way...

Managing Director Mike Montgomery. "To faithfully re-create that in *Speedball 2100* was the most important thing for us."

For those unfamiliar with the game, it's fairly simple. Two bionically enhanced teams square off in a football-sized arena with goals at either end. A steel ball is shot into the ring and then, well — pretty much anything goes. It's almost like lacrosse, but with the ability to run over anyone in your path while punching them in the face. Injuries are common, and there's nothing worse than a player that can't take a beating as well as dish one out. As the team coach, it's your responsibility to not only test your twitch reflexes and keep the team winning, but also manage your funds, upgrade players as you get more money,



■ The sheer amount of players on the screen at once guarantees that the action will always be fast and brutal



■ At the "gym," you can artificially enhance your players with the money you make winning games. Be sure to save some cash for repairs after each game



■ Call in a substitute! When a player gets injured on the field — which will happen — the Robo Docs are on hand to pull them off on stretchers

It's almost like lacrosse, but with the ability to run over anyone in your path while punching them in the face

and, if you're doing well, use your power to draft the league's star players.

To hold on to the same look and feel that made the original so successful, very little is being done to mess with the formula of *Speedball*, despite the fact that it's being given a polygonal overhaul from its original 2D, 16-bit graphics.

"We couldn't afford to let the transition from 2D to 3D affect the gameplay in any way," Montgomery is quick to point out, "which is why a great deal of research and testing was undertaken."

Not surprisingly, the decision was made to retain a camera view much like the original top-down one from *Speedball 2*. "We experimented with a number of different options for camera angles," Montgomery says, "but not one of them proved to be better than the original perspective used in *Speedball 2*."

One aspect that is being changed is the control. The developers who worked at Bitmap Brothers on the original games

had no option at the time other than to use a single-button control scheme. But with PlayStation's eight action buttons, the current team decided they could break the moves up into individual buttons to give players absolute control over their team. Still, a single-button system has been kept in for beginners and purists. Montgomery believes advanced players will perform better with actions unachievable in the single-button mode, but players do have freedom of choice.

In a time when developers feel the need to mess with what was considered perfection (*Frogger*, anyone?), it's actually refreshing to meet a team that feels they don't need to change what obviously works well for the sake of showing off technology. While *Speedball 2100* may prove to be a refresher course in great gaming across Europe, many US gamers will get a new first taste of a series that holds classic status in other parts of the world. Those of us who played the original can hardly wait. — Blake Fischer





■ The graphics and animation are so well done that sometimes you'll swear you're watching ESPN (the channel, not the videogames)

SPORTS AND THE US LAUNCH

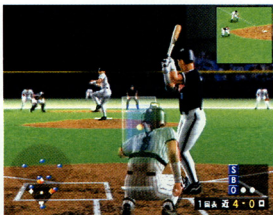
While US developers are still keeping everything they can under wraps, we're pretty confident of a few sports titles that are likely to show up at E3, and subsequently on the US PlayStation2 launch list. *Shoe-ins* are *Madden 2001* from EA and *GameDay 2001* from Sony — even though neither *Madden* nor *GameDay* were immediately available when PlayStation launched. After that, we expect EA to unleash its full suite of sports titles (*NBA* and *NHL* in particular before the end of the year) with Sony following suit if it can. Some surprises may also include soccer titles and the occasional snowboarding game.

■ PLAYSTATION2

GEKIKUUKAN PRO BASEBALL

■ Publisher: **Square** ■ Developer: **Square** ■ Release Date: **March 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

So lifelike you can smell the ballpark



■ Square thoughtfully fades the players transparent when it looks like they will get in the way of the action



In the US, systems launch with football games — in Japan, it's baseball. *Gekikuukan Pro*

Baseball is the first traditional sports title we've seen on the system, and it's definitely an eye-opener. Everything, and we mean everything, in this game is fantastically detailed, from the individual players (Japan's league, of course) to the

Japanese baseball games making the trip overseas. It's unlikely that Square will bring this game over for the US launch, especially with its ties to EA, which is no doubt working on its own *Triple Play* for PlayStation2. Still, as a visual high-water mark, this should give you a good idea of what you can expect from sports games when PS2 launches in the US later this year.

— Blake Fischer

It perfectly reproduced stadiums. Even the motion-captured animation is superlative; it includes everything from the team coming out and high-fiving their teammates after a home run to the tiniest facial expressions.

If it weren't for the special effects used to enhance playability (players like the catcher become transparent when they partially block the player action), you might mistakenly think you were watching an actual televised event. It's that realistic. Add to this some excellent camerawork and this could be the most visually exciting sports game ever (maybe even better than *NFL 2K*, the current champ). To round out the production, Square had several Nihon TV journalists help with the game; together they recorded more than 3,500 lines of dialogue for the color commentary.

With the exception of Sega's *World Series Baseball*, there have been few

Japanese baseball games making the trip overseas. It's unlikely that Square will bring this game over for the US launch, especially with its ties to EA, which is no doubt working on its own *Triple Play* for PlayStation2. Still, as a visual high-water mark, this should give you a good idea of what you can expect from sports games when PS2 launches in the US later this year.

— Blake Fischer



■ The TV-style presentation really adds an authentic feel to the game



■ The mythical enemy creatures in the first game haven't given way to smarter, more elaborately fashioned human opponents

■ PLAYSTATION

TENCHU 2: BIRTH OF THE ASSASSINS

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Sony Music Entertainment/Acquire** ■ Release Date: **Summer 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Tenchu returns with new features — is it as lethal as the first game?



■ Daylight missions add nice visual variety to the game — as well as making stealth considerably harder to achieve



In true ninja style, the original *Tenchu* crept onto store shelves in Japan before *Metal Gear Solid* could, rightfully stealing Solid Snake's bragging rights as the first-ever 3D stealth-adventure game.

Despite some flaws, *Tenchu* was a shining example how amazing 3D adventures can be when you're a ninja. Instead of, say, Duke Nukem or Lara Croft. While the game offered a variety of ninja gadgets, it empowered your use of the most intangible of weapons: stealth and cunning.

Both main characters, the male ninja

Rikimaru and the female ninja Ayame return in this sequel, but the storyline is actually a prequel, set four years before *Tenchu* when the two are just apprentice ninjas.

"Each main character has their own set of stages," explains Acquire President Takuma Endo, who reveals the game offers 32 stages, and even a hidden character to play as. "A few maps are used for more than one character," Endo continues, "but in these cases, the mission objective and time of day, morning or evening, for example, are different depending on the character."

New ninja knick-knacks include poison gas bombs, blinding dust, poison blowgun darts, and a "temporary invisibility" spell

BIRTH OF A MISSION EDITOR

A PlayStation first, *Tenchu 2* will enable you to create your own missions from scratch.

"Just about any mission found in *Tenchu* or *Tenchu 2* can be re-created with the mission creator," says Endo. "As this feature includes Japanese and Western terrain and objects, users can make almost any mission they can imagine. Missions can be saved to memory cards and traded with friends."

Missions are built by first placing scenery and objects freely within a 64x32 area. After the environment is done it's time to go back and place enemies and traps, program the enemy behavior patterns, and create a mission objective. As you complete more missions in the single-player game, more objects and options will open up in the mission creation system. It just doesn't get any cooler than that.



■ New weapons include the flaming arrow and poison gas — guaranteed to do serious damage, of course the new stealth kills are even more cinematic



Endo also reminds us that the player's master in the first *Tenchu*, Lord Gohda, "tended to hand out missions in a slightly capricious fashion," while missions in *Tenchu 2* "flow logically from the story and build on each other."

And what a story it is. When the senior Lord Gohda is assassinated, a feud erupts between his two sons, and a bloody coup ensues involving rival ninja clans. This has enabled Endo and his team to create some new mission objectives, such as protecting an innocent character or searching for a missing one.

Of course, as in any good sequel, the mission experience has been improved in a number of ways.

"The enemies in *Tenchu 2* are certainly smarter and more realistic than those found in *Tenchu*," Endo explains. "For example, in addition to being startled by dead bodies as in the first *Tenchu*, they can call for reinforcements, hear you walk into traps, and attack in a variety of new ways, including a new

jumping attack. Getting stealth kills in *Tenchu 2* will sometimes be harder than in *Tenchu*, sometimes easier. But they will always be more realistic. We've also increased the number of stealth kills."

The environments also offer a higher level of realism. Most man-made items within the game can be broken or blown up, including paper screens and locked doors. Players can now drag and hide dead bodies, and swimming has become part of the game. Another nice touch is a more realistic grappling hook, which no longer just magically sticks to any edged surface in the game.

An early playable level provided by Activision enabled us to check out some of the new weapons. One of the range weapons we put to good use came in

the form of a flaming arrow. Other new ninja knick-knacks included poison gas bombs, blinding dust, poison blowgun darts, and a "temporary invisibility" spell. And sure enough, old-school favorites such as caltrops, shurikens, mines, and bombs will be returning.

Despite all the new items at our disposal, the demo didn't offer much in the way of graphic enhancements or better camera control. But some of the other levels Activision has shown in later builds — specifically some of the daylight missions (which can be seen in the screenshots here) — offer proof that new features (such as swimming and carrying bodies) are working, and that the draw distance has been expanded.

The *Tenchu 2* demo was definitely enjoyable, but during the pauses in the action, (specifically waiting for a guard to turn his back so we could sneak up and skewer him), it was difficult not to let our eyes glaze over the dated PlayStation graphics and begin wondering about the glorious possibilities of the *Tenchu* franchise on Dreamcast, PlayStation2, and other systems still shrouded in ninja-like secrecy.

— Tom Russo

■ Some enemies are smart enough to carry guns — but they won't look so smart when you deliver death from behind



■ Swimming through certain areas will allow you to go undetected



■ Look closely, you'll see your ninja has achieved invisibility

■ Useful items can now be recovered from the bodies of your victims; you can also hide their bodies so as not to blow your cover

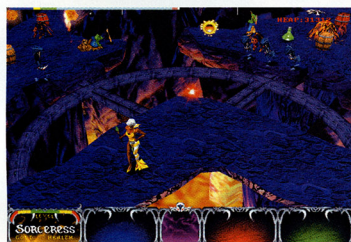


→ Milestones

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games

■ DREAMCAST

GAUNTLET LEGENDS



■ We got these new screenshots from the Dreamcast version of *Gauntlet Legends* right as we were going to print, and they look awesome. As you can see, the team at Midway has added in all of the new classes from the upcoming *Gauntlet: Dark Legacy* arcade version and the four-player play is still intact. There are now seven worlds for you to conquer, including at least one we haven't seen yet, the battlefield world. It looks great so far, and we can't wait for this one to come out in May

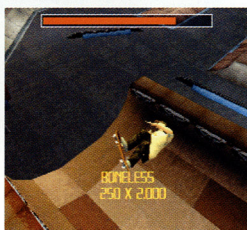


■ PLAYSTATION

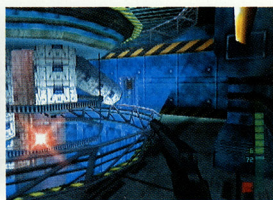
GRIND SESSION



■ Shaba Games and Sony are ready to enter the hotly contested skateboarding genre. Luckily, the game is looking very solid so far and compares favorably to the king, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*. Only time will tell if Shaba can tweak the control enough to compete by May, but it looks like it has a chance of coming out on top



Nintendo 64 may be down, but counting it totally out at this point might be jumping the gun. Leading the 2000 charge for the system is the oft delayed but still highly anticipated *Perfect Dark*, which is looking fabulous — check out the huge assortment of screens on the next page. And while Acclaim may be pulling back support for the system, the company has plans for at least one more big project in the form of *Turok 3*. Finally, we can never discount the fact that there is a new *Zelda* game coming out this year, *The Mask of Majora*, which has gamers slaving — even though Miyamoto isn't actually involved. In the meantime, make sure you check out some of our new Dreamcast releases (including the first online fighter), Sony's *Tony Hawk* killer for PlayStation, and the first shots from the hyper-anticipated *Jedi Knight 3*: *Obi-Wan*.

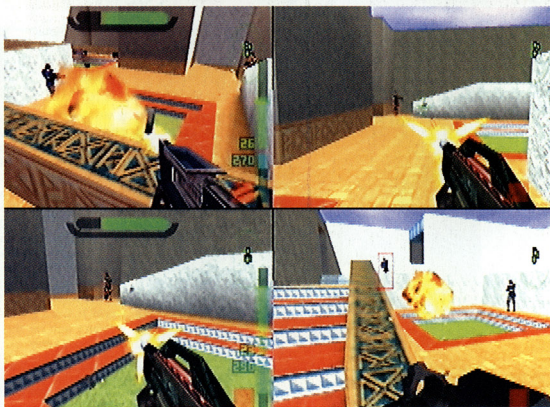


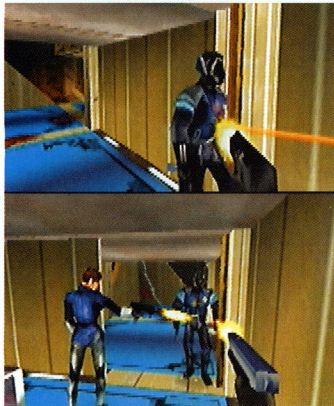
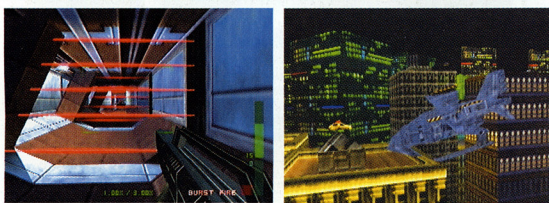
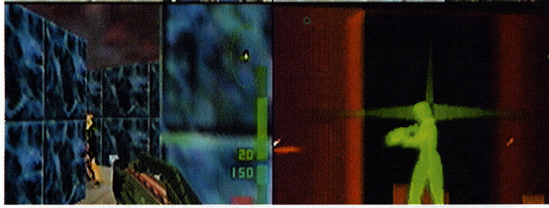
■ N64

PERFECT DARK



■ Rare first showed off clips of this game two years ago at E3, and gamers have been patiently waiting ever since. The good news is that this game looks to be everything *GoldenEye* was and more. As Joanna Dark, heroine extraordinaire, you must take on the ruthless Datadyne corporation through a variety of missions that will take you to places you probably have never been before in an FPS





■ At your disposal are 44 different weapons including the usual assortment of guns as well as many innovative devices like sentry cannons that you can place to guard an area. Just imagine how chaotic the multiplayer deathmatch games will be with this kind of selection. Other multiplayer modes have also been added since the last time we saw the game, including a two-player co-op mode and the Counter-Operative mode. Both of these modes work with the single-player missions. In the first you work with a friend to get through them, and in the second your friend gets to play the bad guys (by jumping between them) and tries to stop you directly. Great stuff — although Rare still has yet to iron out some of the framerate issues when too much is going on (these issues are promised to be fixed by release). Expect this title to hit stores on May 22

■ N64

ZELDA: THE MASK OF MUJULA



■ Could this be the last great Nintendo 64 game? This *Zelda* adventure features plenty of new additions to the classic N64 game including the ability for Link to wear masks of the other races and take on their abilities. Nintendo tentatively has this title scheduled for fall release



→ Milestones

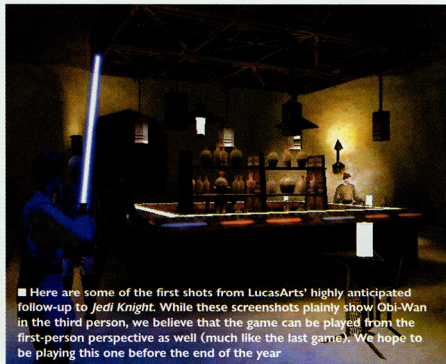


■ PC

JEDI KNIGHT 3: OBI WAN

Health: 100
Force: 100

Active Weapon: (Item: First
Inventory)



■ Here are some of the first shots from LucasArts' highly anticipated follow-up to *Jedi Knight*. While these screenshots plainly show Obi-Wan in the third person, we believe that the game can be played from the first-person perspective as well (much like the last game). We hope to be playing this one before the end of the year.

■ PC

SHOGUN

■ Manage entire Japanese armies in a bid to control feudal Japan in this epic realtime strategy coming from Creative Assembly and Electronic Arts. As you can see, the detail in this game is astounding and really gives a good feel for the scale of a single conflict. This title should be coming your way in May.



■ DREAMCAST

KING OF FIGHTERS '99 EVOLUTION



■ Another year, another revision of SNK's *King Of Fighters*. This year's version, however, has that special spark the series needed in the form of online play. There's nothing the editors at NG crave more (OK, well maybe there is, but not much) than the ability to take on players through the Internet in a giant online tournament. This title comes out in March in Japan, but no US date has been set (our fingers are crossed)



■ DREAMCAST

STAR WARS EPISODE I: RACER



■ One of the worst-kept secrets in the industry was that this game would be coming to a Sega system near you (it was shown in movie form at an arcade show). Now that it's finally been announced, we can tell you with confidence that this should be the strongest port of the game yet with a rock-solid 60fps framerate and split-screen play; unfortunately, though, there's still no Internet head-to-head. This game should make it out sometime this spring



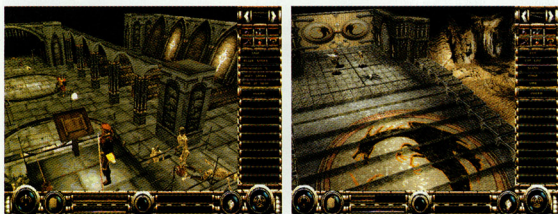
■ DREAMCAST

INDUSTRIAL SPY: OPERATION ESPIONAGE



■ UFO Interactive is bringing this unique title to the States. The challenge is to control a team of spies four at a time — each with their own talents — and try to complete complex missions in a variety of different locales. Think of it as an almost *Mission Impossible*-type game where you can control the whole team at once with an RTS-like interface. This title will be out in April

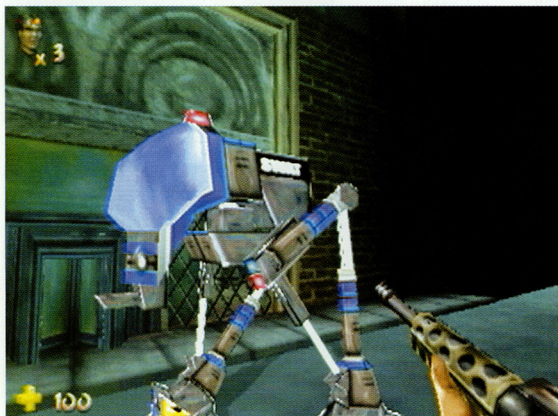
→ Milestones



■ This 3D action/RPG by Gremlin is in much the same vein as *Ultima: Ascension* (except we expect this game to work out of the box). It should be hitting shelves this spring

■ PC

SOULBRINGER



■ N64

TUROK 3



■ PLAYSTATION2

BUCHIGIRE



■ This ArtDink PS2 game falls into the "weirder than what the US ever comes up with" category and is a fighting game where you control, get this, construction equipment. While we don't expect this game to necessarily make it over to the US, stranger things have happened (such as ArtDink's *Tail Of the Sun*)



■ This last *Turok* adventure on N64 will hopefully be the biggest and best yet. Featuring better framerate, solid multiplayer, and tons of weapons and enemies, we're thinking that this might even make us forget about *Rage Wars*



Videogaming: The ODYSSEY

As the world prepares to welcome a new wave of technology with open arms, **Next Generation** takes a moment to reflect on how far we've come with a trip back through time, reeling in the hardware highlights and lowlights that made videogaming the cultural phenomenon it is today



Finally, it seems everyone else is realizing what we've always known: that the game console is as essential as a piece of entertainment equipment as a TV, VCR, or stereo.

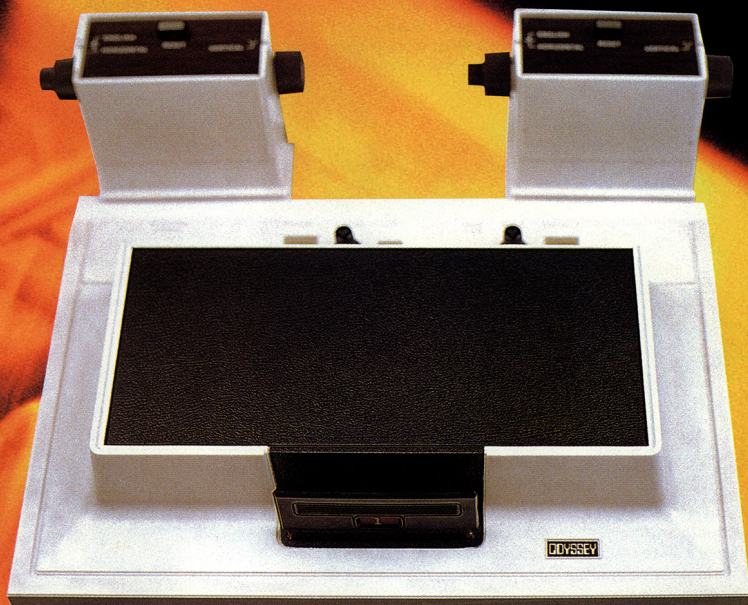
Since the console was conceived in the late 1960s, dozens of gaming devices have passed through bedrooms and living rooms as the march of technology ensured that each successive generation had more and more to offer.

Over the next seven pages, **Next Generation** celebrates this march, remembering the videogame consoles that have touched so many lives so deeply.

Every machine featured here has its historical relevance, whether it's Magnavox's Odyssey (opposite),

which offered analog controllers fashioned with a faux-wood veneer (a nod toward acceptance in the living room a quarter of a century before Sony decided to give its PlayStation2 the design values of a piece of hi-fi equipment), the Atari VCS, or Coleco's imaginatively named ColecoVision.

Their relevance today? Beyond nostalgia, and the historical importance of the seminal games created for the systems, consider this: a mint-condition Magnavox Odyssey can now change hands for over \$1,500. What was once the most primitive example of videogame hardware has come to earn museum status. It's something to keep in mind the next time you're clearing out the attic.

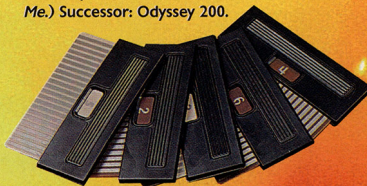


Magnavox Odyssey 100

1972 ↑

While the rest of American youth were experimenting with free love and hallucinogenic drugs, two young engineers, Bill Arrison and Bill Rusley, under the guidance of development manager Ralph Baer, began work on what would become the world's first videogame console. The year was 1966, and by 1967 they had created a fully operational prototype. It took three years more to license the machine to television manufacturer Magnavox. The Odyssey, as it was eventually named, was very expensive to produce; it comprised more than 300 components and was capable of displaying only three dots on screen simultaneously. Lack of color and sound was compensated for by the inclusion of bright screen overlays and additional board games. Odyssey's 1972 launch was relatively successful,

shipping just over 100,000 units by 1975. Shortly after Atari released *Pong*, Magnavox sued Atari, stating that Bushnell had stolen the idea for the game after viewing a prototype of Odyssey. Although Nolan Bushnell denies the accusation, the evidence seems pretty clear that he at least saw Odyssey prior to *Pong*. Atari settled the suit by paying Magnavox a hefty royalty. (Ralph Baer got his revenge later: his *Simon* handheld game is an almost direct rip-off of Bushnell's *Touch Me*.) Successor: Odyssey 200.



■ Odyssey carts were card-like in construction. Six came packed in with the unit.

Atari Pong

1974 →

One of a trio of standalone units Atari released in the mid-'70s, *Pong* took the coin-op concept and transferred it lock, stock, and barrel into the home. The unit's chief restriction was its immovable controllers, presumably incorporated in this fashion in order to make the console

experience as close as possible to the arcade original. Coleco delivered a *Pong* clone at around the same time, and both companies enjoyed enormous success, shifting several million units worldwide. Successors: *Super Pong* (shown), *Quadra Pong*, *Ultra Pong Doubles*, *Video Pinball*.



← Coleco Telstar

1976

An ambitious pre-cartridge attempt to cram multiple games into one machine, the tri-sider Telstar featured paddles for *Pong*, a wheel for a

racing game, and a light gun (which actually makes it quite similar to Ralph Baer's original *Odyssey* prototype). Successors: *Telstar Arcade*, *Coleco Combat*.



Fairchild Channel F

1976 →

Fairchild's system, also known as the Zircon Channel F, may look like an old eight-track cartridge player, but in 1976, it represented the state of the art in videogame entertainment. Simple versions of *Hockey* and *Tennis* came supplied on the Channel F's

internal ROM, and Fairchild committed itself to releasing a new game for the machine every month. During its lifespan, 27 cartridges were released, including groundbreaking titles such as the educational *MathQuiz*, and art title *Doodle*.



← Studio II

1976

RCA's attempt to get into the game business, it featured interchangeable carts — the

videogame hot item in 1976 — but was fatally hampered by its lack of color display.



The PC Equation

The influence of early (and modern) PCs on games is obviously tremendous, so rather than try and include them here, we're saving a review of the world of computers for another issue later this year. In the meantime, here are a few shots of some of the more memorable gaming PCs.



Apple II

Released: 1977

Successors: Apple II+, Apple IIe, Apple IIc, Apple IIGS

Commodore 64

Released: 1982

Successors: Commodore 128

Amiga 1000

Released: 1984

Atari 800

Released: 1979

Atari VCS

1977 →

The machine that made videogaming a hobby in the home, and a fortune for Atari, the importance of the VCS (Video Computer System) can't be overstated. Not only did it help create the first third parties (starting with Activision, a company formed by ex-Atarians), and establish home games as a fact of life in many homes, it also provided a blueprint for how *not* to do a console. Because Atari exercised no quality control over third parties, the market was

glutted by inferior product (in truth, much of it was by Atari, which didn't seem to exercise any quality control over internal projects, either), which contributed to the crash of the early eighties. Also known as: Atari 2600, Sears Telegames. Successors: While Atari released several cosmetically different versions, Coleco's VCS-compatible Gemini added some new features (which were never taken advantage of by developers).



← Bally Arcade

1978

The original Bally Professional Arcade was released in 1978 and quickly established itself as the first computer/console hybrid. The most popular cartridge for the machine was its BASIC cartridge, which allowed users to write programs in the console's 4K RAM and save them to cassette. Many gamers were attracted to the machine, too, thanks to its built-in version of

the arcade classic, *Boot Hill*.

The huge success of Atari's VCS forced Bally to cease production of the console in 1979, although the story doesn't end there: a group of enthusiasts bought the rights to the machine from Bally and re-released the console as the Astrocade in 1981, including the BASIC cartridge code built into the machine's ROM.

Magnavox Odyssey 2

1978 →

The second experiment into console hardware from Dutch electronics giant Philips, Odyssey 2 (released in Europe as Videopac G7000) had a touch-sensitive (some would say thump-sensitive) keyboard as standard, which was supposed to appeal to adults seeking to give their children something more

than a "mere" games machine. In the absence of wide-scale software support, however, the console was always destined to come off second-best to Atari's all-conquering VCS — especially after Magnavox lost a "look and feel" lawsuit to Atari and had to pull its hot-selling *Pac Man* clone, *KC Munchkin*, off the market.



← Mattel Intellivision

1979

Toy company Mattel felt obliged to grab a slice of the console market as it burgeoned in the late '70s. The result was a machine more sophisticated than Atari's VCS, with graphics of a higher resolution, and even an optional speech module. However, in designing Intellivision, Mattel also created

the world's first console joystick, a "rockable disc" affair that alienated some users who equated videogames with joysticks. Despite this, the machine enjoyed some fine software. Also known as: Sears Super Video Arcade, RadioShack TandyVision. Successors: Intellivision II, Intellivision III.



Vectrex

1982 →

The most innovative console to come out of the '80s, Milton Bradley's all-in-one monochrome console was the preserve of the specialist gamer, who understood that Vectrex's lack of sprites simply served to make it an intriguing platform. The vector display offered

higher-res graphics than any other system before, and Vectrex used acetate screen overlays as a token gesture toward bringing color to its games, which included *Armor Attack*, *Scramble*, and the synthesized-speech-laden *Spike*.



← AdventureVision

1982

Entex's console was an all-in-one unit like Vectrex. Today, it's best remembered for its unique (but not very compelling) display technology: it used a

rotating mirror and a line of orange LEDs to create an image. Only a few carts were released, the best being a *Scramble*-type game.

Emerson Arcadia

1982 →

Despite being released in 1982, Arcadia relied on '70s technology to drive its games. Its library of 23 cartridges contains no titles worthy of note, just simple interpretations of games from earlier systems. Arcadia relied

largely on its aesthetics to gain customer appeal, but the misguided use of tight telephone wire between the console and controllers meant players usually tugged the machine around the floor during use.



← Colecovision

1982

Any gamer wanting to seriously impress friends in the early '80s had little choice but to pick up this, the first machine to be marketed as being capable of bringing the quality of the arcade into the home. A close (but not perfect, as was routinely claimed) conversion of *Donkey Kong* wowed Saturday afternoon shoppers, and games

like *BC's Quest for Tires* and *Time Pilot* helped establish Colecovision as the top machine of its day. Unfortunately, Coleco's decision to focus on the ADAM computer upgrade for ColecoVision just as the PC and console businesses were simultaneously crashing helped doom the system. Successor: ADAM.



Atari 5200

1982 →

Essentially a cartridge-only Atari 400 computer, it had a much-lauded pause feature, but came with such poor joysticks — they

didn't center and practically shipped broken — that 5200 was the clear runner-up to Colecovision.



Nintendo Ent. System

1985

Consumers knew videogame class even in the early- to mid-'80s, and it was Shigeru Miyamoto software such as *Super Mario Bros.* that made the 8-bit Famicom (as it was known in Japan) a phenomenon, not the technology itself.

Even today, "Nintendo" is still synonymous with videogames for a certain generation of American parents. Introducing the licensing model for third parties ensured that the company's profits swelled to titanic proportions.

Sega Master System

1986 →

The Master System's 8-bit architecture was comparable to Nintendo's NES, but Tonka's marketing couldn't compare to Nintendo's — and *Phantasy Star* notwithstanding, Sega never

managed to deliver a killer app on the level of *Mario*. The system came in as a distant second-place to NES. Also known as: Mark III (Japan).



Atari 7800

1986

After sitting on the shelf since 1984, Atari released this 2600-compatible unit only after Nintendo proved there was still a market with NES. Unfortunately, its age showed; Atari had almost no relationship

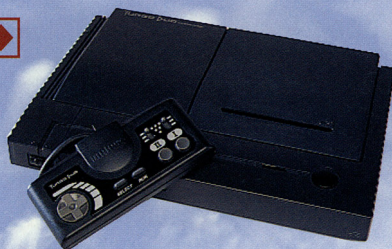
with retailers or third parties by the time it was released, and so it never managed to stand up to the might of NES. Today, it's best known for some of its bizarre games, like *Ninja Golf*.

NEC TurboGrafx

1989 →

As NEC's venture into the console hardware market featured a custom 8-bit CPU, 16-bit graphics technology, 64 hardware sprites, and support from some of Japan's most innovative codeshops, it was little surprise to see it become

the format of choice among connoisseurs, especially when the first gaming CD-ROM drive, TurboCD, was released. Ultimately, though, the graphics couldn't stand up against the onslaught of Genesis and Super Nintendo. Successor: TurboDuo.



← Sega Genesis

1989

Genesis, also known as Mega Drive, faced almost insurmountable odds against Nintendo, but thanks to Sega's savvy marketing, support from key third parties like EA, and a killer app in *Sonic the Hedgehog*, Sega managed to make NES and

Super NES look like toys, and grabbed a hefty share of the 16-bit market. A lame CD add-on, followed by a lame 32-bit upgrade, 32X, hurt the system just as Nintendo was finding a second life with *Donkey Kong* and *Killer Instinct*.

SNK Neo-Geo

1990 →

If you really want to know if you're a hardcore gamer, there's a simple test: have you ever owned a piece of hardware with an SNK logo on it? (No, the

Neo-Geo Pocket Color doesn't count.) Way ahead of its time, Neo-Geo brought true coin-op power to the home — at a price of \$200 per game.



← Super NES

1991

The Super Famicom, as it was known in Japan, trailed Sega's 16-bit hardware to the US market by nearly two years. Still, it didn't take Nintendo long to claw back market share. Its supremely capable Super NES took Japan by

storm thanks to software from Shigeru Miyamoto's teams within NCL and third-party developers such as Enix and Sqauresoft, and its US edition slowly overtook Genesis to become the dominant 16-bit console.

No Consolation

Whether they exist purely in the minds of over-eager technicians, on the drawing boards of pent-up designers, or in actual prototype form, certain game machines are destined to remain at the conceptual stage. These consoles are the most famous examples of just that.

JagDuo

Shown at the 1995 summer CES in Chicago, this console was to be an all-in-one Jaguar-and-CD-drive unit. With Sony's PlayStation already available at this point, however, it didn't take Atari long to realize that such a format was dead in the water.



Philips CD-i

1992 →

As a pioneer of the compact disc revolution, it was little surprise to see Philips make such bold strides in the pursuit of the format's potential outside of the audio realm. And how unfortunate it was to see the company deliver technology so patently incapable of doing

justice to that potential. Even playing host to a series of *Zelda*-themed titles (somehow licensed from Nintendo) was not enough to save the format from the grim destiny so eminently foreseeable. When a format's best game is an FMV title, the less said the better.



← 3DO

1993

Trip Hawkins' dream of creating a standard gaming platform, essentially the console equivalent of a stable PC environment, was laudable (and one that may still come into effect if Sony has its way), but his ambition exceeded the technology at his disposal. Despite being the first console to convincingly throw around large amounts of texture-mapped

polygons, the excitement surrounding 3DO rapidly dissolved once it became clear what Sony and Sega had planned for their 32-bit consoles (the \$799 price tag and insistence by 3DO that the machine do more than "just" play games didn't help, either). It did not prevent a number of intriguing 3DO titles from being made, nor did it dampen Panasonic's spirits (the company produced a top-loading version of its R.E.A.L. Player to complement its original front-loading design), but the format sadly proved to be an ultimately fruitless exercise.

Atari Jaguar

1993 →

Reading this magazine five years ago, you'd be forgiven putting down a deposit for Atari's ambitious 64-bit console. But this was a time when texture-mapped polys were rare elements, not the stock-in-trade of every codeshop in existence. The luster faded from Jaguar in

spectacularly rapid fashion; regardless of the value evident in the likes of *Cybermorph* and *Tempest 2000*, the hardware began to date almost by the week. Another Atari failure, not helped by the release of a toilet-seat-like CD add-on.



Nintendo Virtual Boy

1995 →

How Nintendo gave the greenlight to this piece of hardware still remains a mystery. Utilizing hardware from Massachusetts-based Reflection Technology, the machine produced a red-saturated, nearly convincing 3D display. The machine was hardly suited to

extended periods of use, but then few gamers minded, since only a paltry number of VB titles were worth investing any time in. The late Gumppei Yokoi, who oversaw the machine's design and production, left Nintendo following the machine's abysmal reception at retail. **NextGen**



Nintendo PlayStation

With Nintendo supplying the guts, all it needed was Sony to supply CD-ROM storage technology and the happy alliance would be sealed. Except one company did not have faith in optical storage, leaving the other to take the concept on its own...



3DO M2 series

Having summarily failed in his bid to deliver a format that would be a standard for videogame hardware as VHS was to VCRs, Trip Hawkins pressed on with a new generation: M2. Result? A bunch of mere mockups.



→ Finals

Some months, we really love our job. There's something great for every game platform — even Nintendo 64



→ Dreamcast

Dead or Alive 2	80
Carrier	82
Crazy Taxi	82
Virtua Striker 2000	82
Wild Metal	82
NHL2K	83



■ Although few games can boast such blatantly calculated sex appeal, DOA2 more than has the gameplay to back it up

■ Dreamcast

Dead or Alive 2

■ Publisher: Tecmo ■ Developer: Tecmo

The breast fighting game ever?



Dead or Alive introduced game players to a whole new form of motion sickness. This 3D fighter, which saw action on PlayStation, offered some decent fighting, solid graphics, and interesting characters — but people came in droves to see the

bouncing breasts. Each woman in the game, to put it mildly, was endowed with assets far beyond those of mortal women.

For the sequel, Tecmo's tamed the exaggeratedly bouncy behemoths and concentrated instead on rock-solid gameplay,

responsive controls, a series of wonderful fighting arenas, and graphics that rival those of the Dreamcast's other überfighter, *Soul Calibur*. An arcade-perfect port, *Dead or Alive 2* manages to pay homage to its roots while simultaneously elevating the genre that birthed it.

A total of 12 male and female fighters, at once both gorgeous and



■ Precise control + snappy moves = major whup-ass



deadly, are largely plucked from the original to make up *Dead or Alive 2*'s roster. Extensive motion capture work has ensured that the characters move as they would in real life. They react realistically, too, which can influence the outcome of a battle. When an attack is countered, the defending character will slide his body almost imperceptibly; the punch or kick



85 Nintendo 64

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Mario Party 2	85
Roadsters	85
Worms: Armageddon	85

PlayStation

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Armored Core: Master of Arena	90
Colony Wars: Red Sun	90
NASCAR Rumble	90



94 PC

The Sims	92
MIG Alley	94
Rally Championship	94
Shadow Watch	94
Wall Street Trader	94

The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at **Next Generation** will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**

★★★★☆ **Excellent**

★★★☆☆ **Good**

★★☆☆☆ **Fair**

★☆☆☆☆ **Bad**

🇯🇵 Denotes a review of a Japanese product

THE BOUNCING BOUNTY...

Au naturel was the theme of the day in *Dead or Alive*. No character, male or female, would be caught dead (or alive, for that matter) in a bra, and the effect was oddly mesmerizing. When a female character won a battle, she'd sway seductively, or jump up and down — and her breasts danced with a wonderful sort of physics that only seems to play out in certain adult-themed films.

Exaggerated boobery is kept to a minimum in *Dead or Alive 2*, but there is certainly subtle movement and cleavage aplenty. Few will be unduly influenced by the new attitude toward the female form, especially when the fighting action serves as a particularly wonderful distraction...

will sail harmlessly by, and the attacker will experience a brief disorientation as their flank is presented to the enemy. Crippling attacks, which can be aimed at the torso or legs, will cause a stricken character to grasp at the injured body part before crumbling to the unforgiving ground.

Battles take place on multi-tiered arenas, and it's altogether possible (and remarkably fun) to hammer an enemy over an edge or through a window, hurtling downward to a new combat zone. When the fists are flying, characters can also slam their targets into walls, boulders, columns, and other impediments for added damage; there's also a neat electric barrier on one stage that serves as a nice tip of the hat to the original "danger zone" areas from the first *Dead or Alive*. All of this adds a remarkable strategic value to each and every level — positioning is key, and the last place a seriously wounded fighter needs to be is near some sort of perilous drop.

Each brawler has their own particular style and inclination



■ The backgrounds are as exquisitely designed as the combatants — this is one beautiful game

toward battle. The beautiful wrestler Tina seems to excel at close-range fighting, and she can perform a series of bone-crunching moves including (but not limited to) the bodyslam, figure-four leglock, spinning piledriver, suplex, dropkick, and the Frankensteiner. Attacks can also bring the game environment into play; when Tina has a foe cornered near a wall, she can duck behind him, bash the back of his foolish head into the architecture, and then smash him to the ground. In total, each fighter has about 30-35 moves in their repertoire, as well as a potent defensive option that enables blocking and various counterattacks. The solid controls



make attacking an easy art, and movement with both the D-Pad and analog stick comes off with nary a hitch.

Tecmo has put tremendous care into this title, and small touches to improve the game's look and play litter each battlefield. *Dead or Alive 2* recognizes columns and obstacles that might obscure gameplay, and, when the fight shifts toward these areas, the offending piece of architecture goes transparent. Water splashes realistically, and snow will partially bury a prone grappler. The flawless character modeling is such that even the graying hair on Bass Armstrong (you'll call him Hulk Hogan) will be cause for wonder.

A rather perplexing story mode (with one very strange boss) serves as great reason to appreciate the



tag-team feature. You select a two-man unit and battle against another team — with two fighters duking it out at one time. A teammate may enter the fray at any time, and the resting character's energy is slowly replenished. Double-team moves that unleash a crescendo of whup-ass can be performed, and a fighter can send his prey flying to the unwelcome clutches of his teammate. It's the perfect smash-mouth mode and the ultimate topping on the fine dessert that is *Dead or Alive 2*. —Greg Orlando



■ Multi-level combat areas open up the world as in no other fighting game

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: You'd have to be *Dead and Buried* not to enjoy *Dead or Alive 2*. Gorgeous graphics, excellent gameplay, and some beautiful characters put this square in the running against Namco's *Soul Calibur* as the best Dreamcast fighting game.

Wild Metal

Platform: **Dreamcast** Publisher: **Rockstar Games** Developer: **DMA Designs**



■ **Not the best-looking game, but Wild Metal offers enough different spins on gameplay to be worth a try**

A sparse, third-person, tank-based shooter ported from PC, *Wild Metal* is set in a dystopian future where man is ruled by the machines he created. The game offers five tanks, named after various land and sea creatures,

which all sport unique features, handle differently, and fire trajectory-based weapons as you tear through three rather bleak and mountainous worlds populated by robotic enemies.

You control not only a tank's movement, but its turret alignment and elevation as well. Destroying the enemy becomes a strategic challenge, as a tank can capture the high ground and then lob death on targets below, or use the mountains to screen

its presence from a foe and then shoot a well-placed shell into a target above it. It's this thinking-man's shooting that serves *Metal* quite well and makes the two-player mode an absolute joy.

Small problems — notably the dreary graphics and fact that the trajectory-based gunplay makes it impossible for a tank to shoot while moving — keep *Metal* from greatness. Still, the recoil alone is worth the price of admission. — Greg Orlando

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: War is hell, kid, and sometimes it's pretty damn ugly, too. But we sort of enjoy the smell of *Wild Metal* in the morning.

Carrier

Platform: **Dreamcast** Publisher: **Jaleco** Developer: **Jaleco**



■ **Though not terribly inspired, Carrier makes a nice diversion while you're waiting for Resident Evil: Code Veronica**

More "survival horror" in the *Resident Evil* mold, *Carrier* puts you in the role of Jack Ingles, a member of a rescue team sent to investigate why the flagship carrier, *Heimdal*, has ceased communication. Turns out the ship has been overrun by some

especially freaky mutants.

The game offers a fully 3D environment, although as seen mostly from fixed, *Resident Evil*-style camera angles. As usual, sometimes this means less than helpful views, or times when an enemy remains unseen until it's right on top of you. However, there is a free-viewing, first-person camera view available, using the high-tech "BEM-T3" helmet. Otherwise, the action and adventure game elements are about what you'd expect, with a serviceable storyline,

(mostly) decent voice acting, and reasonably challenging puzzles.

It's also fairly short (eight or nine hours), but once you've beaten the game with Jack, you play again from the perspective of his partner Jessifer. This version uses the same basic maps, but with different puzzles, cut scenes, and weapons, and adds another two or three hours of gameplay. The ending, however, don't provide a very satisfying resolution — perhaps because Jaleco is hoping for a sequel. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Well made and reasonably entertaining, but nothing you haven't seen before.

Virtua Striker 2000

Platform: **Dreamcast** Publisher: **Sega** Developer: **Sega**



■ **Poor control means that you're going to be losing quite a few games. Here's a "rub it in" goal during injury time, courtesy of the CPU**

Perhaps the ultimate factor that determines the ultimate success or failure of a sports game is how well the controls are implemented. You can try to cover things up with pretty

graphics and loads of options, but if you're fighting the controller, the game is just no fun. *Virtua Striker 2000* is a prime example of failing to get it right where it counts the most.

The most glaring control problem hits you on defense. You have no say as to which man you command; the CPU automatically switches to the player nearest the ball, immediately, every time, even switching you out right in the middle of an action.

Other faux pas include no analog control, sloppy motion capture transitions that makes touch passing a crap shoot, and only one available camera angle. Worst is the annoying shooting meter; if you're near the goal (basically, mid-field and closer), you have to limit the power of your shot to about half to avoid kicking the ball over the net.

On the plus side, the players look good and move realistically. But in the end, the gameplay is maddening. — Rob Smoika

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: It may look good, but the poor controls drag this one down to rental status.

■ Dreamcast

Crazy Taxi

Publisher: **Sega** Developer: **Sega**

All hail



■ **No apologies needed in the dash for the fastest times — and the wildest routes — in Crazy Taxi**



→ Sometimes, a really great arcade game makes a terrific home game. Sometimes, it doesn't. Fortunately, *Crazy Taxi* falls into the first category — even if it seems like it doesn't at first.

To begin with, the conversion is high arcade perfect. The idea is to drive around an impressively large city, picking up passengers and delivering them where they need to go before a time limit runs out, then as quickly as possible find a new passenger and start over again. Much like *SF Rush*, half the fun is in finding shortcuts and "crazy" routes through the city — through parks, across rooftops, through subway tunnels — to get to places as quickly as possible. It's fast, it controls reasonably well, and both the graphics and sound include a wealth

of detail that make the environment come alive.

But after about an hour, you realize you're just doing the same routes over and over again — passengers are camped at set locations, and always have the same destinations. There simply isn't enough randomness (in fact, there really isn't any), and the replay value of the original game plummets accordingly.

What ultimately saves the Dreamcast version is the "Crazy Box," a separate series of mini-games, including obstacle courses, running down target balloons, and picking up a certain number of passengers in an allotted time. These are, simply put, compulsively addictive, and can easily eat up hours of your time as you beat them, only to uncover more. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A strangely addictive experience overall, *Crazy Taxi* is perfect for the gaming obsessive, but also makes a great party game.

■ Dreamcast

NHL 2K

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Black Box

Worthy hockey —
but is it really next
generation?

■ Break-dancing or crashing to the ice after a brutal check? You make the call. As in *NFL 2K*, instant replay lets you view a good hit from every possible angle

L Rewind R Forward ▲ Back
B Zoom Out X Zoom In



The once-languishing *Sega Sports* brand has come roaring back into the limelight, all in the blink of an eye. *NFL 2K* and *NBA 2K* set new standards for their respective sports, so expectations were high for *NHL 2K*. Well, as it happens, Sega has managed to put together a decent hockey game — but not quite what was needed.

To its credit, the game feels very good — the developers at Black Box had previously worked on the underappreciated *NHL Powerplay* series on PlayStation and Saturn, and it shows. Controlling players with the analog stick is very tight, and this is the best example to date of a hockey game that combines the level of accuracy found in the classic 16-bit titles with well-suited analog control. Likewise, the game's deceptively simple control setup allows for precise passing and shooting, providing a remarkably elegant and cohesive gameplay experience.

Graphically, *NHL 2K* is easily the best-looking hockey game for home consoles, and pales only slightly in comparison with EA's *NHL 2000* running on a high-end

■ *NHL 2K* is a beautifully rendered game — right down to the reflections on the ice

TOO MUCH TOO SOON

To say that *NHL 2K* got off on the wrong foot would be a massive understatement. Sega sent out reviewable copies of the game to all the magazines and web sites, when in fact Black Box was still working around the clock to tweak the game and fix some glaring gameplay issues. And, especially in early reviews posted on the Web, the game took some serious, undeserved flak. The final, *final* product may not be perfect, but some early reports were unwarranted.

PC. Players have an exceptionally high polygon count, giving them a realistic, smooth-skinned look. As has now become commonplace, most of the players also have their real-life counterpart's face mapped on. Combined with more than a thousand fluid, motion-captured animations (some of which are truly a joy to watch, although some of the transitions need work), the game looks and moves just like the real thing.

The trouble is, *NHL 2K* fails to offer some of the features that gamers might expect from a next-generation sports title. There are no practice or shootout modes to be found, no icon passing, and true touch/drop passes are absent as well. In fact, although it's remarkably easy to get into, over the haul it simply doesn't offer the depth it needs to.



■ There's a "passive" demeanor setting. We aren't quite sure what it does — still, you can switch strategies on-the-fly

There's a reason for this, of course: Sega granted Black Box roughly *half* the time Visual Concepts had to finish the aforementioned football and basketball titles. On a certain level, that makes *NHL 2K* all the more impressive for coming so damn close to matching those other titles in quality. However, as a practical matter, it's still lacking.

— Evan Shamoon



Bottom Line: If you're a hockey fan and own a Dreamcast, you definitely need this game. Otherwise, you may want to wait 'til next year.



■ One of the best racing series for PlayStation now graces N64 owners with its presence

■ Nintendo 64

Ridge Racer 64

■ Publisher: Nintendo of America ■ Developer: Nintendo Software Technologies

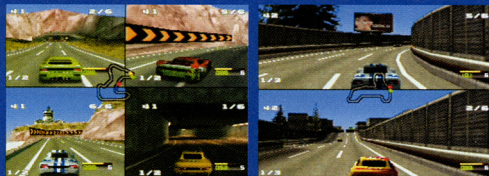
How to make a classic even better

At first glance, the N64 version of a classic PlayStation racer might not seem like much, but greatness abounds in this arcade racer. The game contains all the tracks from *Ridge Racer* and *Ridge Racer Revolution*, as well as four completely new tracks

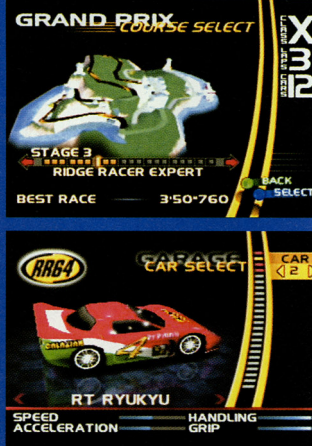
unique to the N64 version, for a grand total of nine. Each of these has additional paths that open up as you go through the Grand Prix mode, and you can also race them at night and backward. Another 20 races, dubbed Z-racing, are available after you finish the first 20.

SPECIAL CARS

Ridge Racer 64 contains 25 cars, but not all of them are your typical "chassis-and-wheels" variety. Some of the special cars players can unlock include a larger-than-life size Blinky from *Pac-Man* and *Dig-Dug*'s own Pooka. The last car unlocked, and the most prized vehicle in the game, has all its stats completely maxed out and is called, appropriately enough, the "Ultra 64."



■ The multiplayer options include a four-player mode, a first for *Ridge Racer*



■ Lots of cars and lots of tracks give this racer some much-appreciated variety



which can really alter the feel of the game.

There are a few problems — computer-controlled cars tend to cheat horribly, jumping in front and knocking into you faster than should be possible, and at times the collision models are a bit off. However, the overall speed and action of the game, along with the variation of drift and feel of the different cars, makes for a terrific racing experience. The game contains 25 cars to unlock, each of which feels different than the next, and with the stunt physics, you can pull off some cool tricks. As racers go, it's easily among the best for N64, and well worth it even for non-racing fans.

— Michael Wolf



■ This looks as good as anything on N64

The game has four single-player racing modes (Quick Race, Grand Prix, Car Attack, and Time Attack), and the multiplayer mode supports four players — the first *Ridge Racer* game to do so. It's obvious that NST spent a lot of time trying to get the *Ridge Racer* feel into the game; although the team used none of the original code from Namco, they did an excellent job. And with three different drift settings (*Ridge Racer Classic*, *Ridge Racer Revolution*, and *Ridge Racer 64*) it can feel *exactly* like the original if you want it to. The game also has two different collision models (*Ridge Racer Revolution* and *Ridge Racer Progressive*),

ENextGen ★★★★★☆

Bottom Line: While *Ridge Racer 64* will feel very familiar to *Ridge Racer* fans, it offers enough features and bonuses to make it a must-own for any N64 racing gamer.

■ Nintendo 64

Mario Party 2

■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ Developer: Hudson Soft

With no cops around, the party raged on



■ Some mini-games require pure luck to win



■ Each game board has a different theme and costumes



■ Chance Time can completely sway the course of the game in a single turn

→ The N64 has seen some unusual games in its time. In this case, developer Hudson Soft has created a great party game with *Mario Party 2*, a board game that challenges four players to run around five different boards, gathering the most stars and coins in a set number of turns. Between turns, players compete in a randomly chosen mini-game (from a total of 64) that rewards the winner with additional coins. Each board has its own theme, costumes for the players, tricks, and secrets.

Twenty of the mini-games from the first *Mario Party* return, but those that required you to spin the control stick in circles — which had the unfortunate tendency to break controllers — have been replaced with versions that instead require frantic button pushing. Not all of them are action-oriented, however, and many require a little skill, and a little luck to succeed, making it accessible to all types of players.

The game has one major drawback, however — with fewer than four players, it loses much of its luster. With just one player, running around collecting stars and coins to beat three CPU opponents is about as fun as a single-player game of *Monopoly*. The game does contain the ability to purchase and unlock all 64 mini-games so they can be played outside

of the board game, and unlocking enough mini-games opens a single-player mini-game, but that's not enough to inspire a solo player to spend hours watching the computer roll dice.

Ultimately, though, this is an

improvement over the first *Mario Party*, fixing many of the problems and providing a deeper, more rewarding experience. Players who want something family-friendly should definitely pick up this game.

— Michael Wolf



■ Each mini-game starts with instructions and the option of going through a practice run



■ Bowser Land is a secret board that must be opened up in order to be played

E_NNextGen★★★★☆

Bottom Line: This does exactly what it sets out to do — provide four players with a simple but fun board game and entertaining mini-games.

Worms: Armageddon

■ Platform: Nintendo 64

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Team 17



■ Digging holes is a famous worm pastime

On PC, *Worms: Armageddon* provided hours of action/strategy as you bombed, nuked, punched, and flamed your way through the enemy hordes. But on console, it's sort of like watching *The Matrix* without surround sound — it's still good, but not quite as entertaining as we remembered.

The N64 version contains plenty of weapons, game options, and multiplayer capabilities. However, while you can still create your own teams and name your army of six

worms, the process of moving through the alphabet one character at a time with the analog pad is enough to make you give up in disgust and go with the default teams.

The game does contain plenty of solo-player missions and training levels to test skills, but the real attraction with this game lies in multiplayer. It's still amazing fun to hurl flying sheep and homing missiles at your buddy's worms, and the control interface works surprisingly well within the game's limited "move, aim, fire" requirements. But still, one great strength of the PC version was the ability to connect to the Internet and play another human, any time, day or night, even when you were "alone" — something the N64 just can't offer, which lessens its value as a "one player" experience.

— Michael Wolf

E_NNextGen★★★★☆

Bottom Line: A good rental if you're planning a gaming party, but for day-to-day gaming, these annelids just don't cut it.

Roadsters

■ Platform: Nintendo 64

■ Publisher: Titus ■ Developer: Titus



■ The game contains a nice sense of speed in first person

Only a few N64 racing games rise above the crowd and offer something you can't find anywhere else. *Roadsters*, however, nearly pokes its head out of the mob. Although not amazing, it's a surprisingly solid game with enough features to make it worth checking out.

Roadsters contains 34 cars, from officially licensed models like the Alfa Romeo Spider to completely fictional convertibles. There are also 10 tracks that can be raced both forward and backward. Also, four players can

race head-to-head in multiplayer competition, although there's some serious slowdown. While the tracks vary slightly, the backgrounds are rather lifeless. Sure, there's a flying plane or black helicopter flying by every once in a while, but the locations mostly feel deserted.

After a while, the whole game begins to feel a bit stale. Each car handles a bit differently, but not so much that your driving style has to change drastically. The graphics aren't anything special, and the framerate, even in single-player games, don't always cut it. Despite these faults, the game provides a good sense of speed and the unusual aspect of racing \$50,000 convertibles and smashing them into walls. Subsequently, *Roadsters* will appeal to the majority of gamers.

— Michael Wolf

E_NNextGen★★★★☆

Bottom Line: While not as adrenaline-pumping as *San Francisco Rush*, it's a solid game with a decent engine that will certainly tide racing fans over until Nintendo releases *Ridge Racer 64*.



■ For one reason or another, the heroine of *Fear Effect* always ends up fighting enemies in some state of undress, whether it be in a towel (above) or a bikini (below)

■ PlayStation

Fear Effect

■ Publisher: **Eidos** ■ Developer: **Kronos**

A thrill ride on a CD



➔ As any console system gets closer to the end of a long lifecycle, the challenge for developers to innovate is tougher than ever before. That's why a game such as *Fear Effect* rises above the rest of the PlayStation crowd: it's willing to take the risks that push it to the top of the gaming heap.

The game's opening cinema sets up the action perfectly. A young Chinese girl walking next to a hooded funeral procession delivers a mysterious, rambling monologue — then gets her throat cut by an assassin. Not exactly what you'd expect from typically tame PlayStation fare, but that's just the beginning. The game then backs up 24 hours earlier, revealing a *Blade Runner*-esque dark and futuristic Hong Kong. Two mercenaries fly into the city looking for the girl and



the \$90 million bounty on her head. Unfortunately, that kind of cash doesn't come easy. Your job is to control the pair (and, later, a third partner), surviving betrayals, hit squads, and otherworldly demons in a struggle to simply escape the mess they've gotten themselves into.

The feel of the game is helped immensely by some of the most innovative technology and design that PlayStation has seen. While the game controls very much like a *Resident Evil* game, Kronos has opted to use FMV backgrounds instead of pre-rendered still images. During certain dramatic moments, the camera can pan and sweep cinematically, giving the game a very unique and immersive feel. Add to this the fact that the storyline doesn't pull any punches whatsoever — lead characters get maimed, swear, and often find themselves in, well, less than pleasant situations. You have a game that feels more like an R-rated John Woo film than your standard console action/adventure.

Another nice touch is that you're constantly playing *all* of the characters in the game. If one character says they are going to do something, you control that character for a while, then go back



■ The lead characters in *Fear Effect* have absolutely no reservations about using lethal force to solve a problem

and take control of the character you left behind, so you never miss a minute of action. This works extremely well — the game delivers a great story loaded with events that leave an impact.

Unfortunately, like many great game premises, there are a few flaws that keep *Fear Effect* from achieving perfection. In this case, the problem is the long load times when restoring a game. While there are plenty of save points, the difficulty level is so high that you'll find yourself dying quite often and restoring until you figure out the



■ Since the backgrounds are FMV, cameras pan and zoom as you walk around an area

Dragon's Lair-like sequence of actions required to beat a certain area (kill the left guard, then run, then kill the right guard, then roll, etc.). You're bound to get frustrated at points: for every 20 seconds of gameplay you have before you die, you have to endure 10-15 seconds of loading. It's maddening! There's also a lack of intuitiveness with

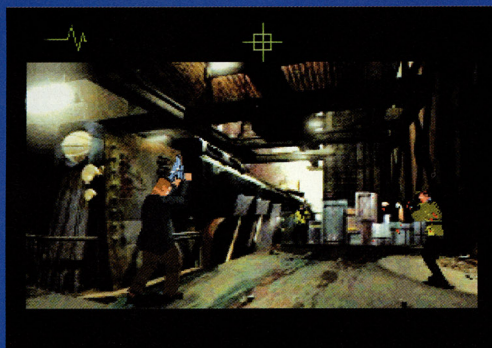
some of the puzzles (some of which will kill you if done incorrectly). At times you will feel like banging your head into the wall.

Still, if you love a good story and have the patience to live with the game's few flaws, *Fear Effect* should go a long way to tiding you over until you get your hands on a PS2.

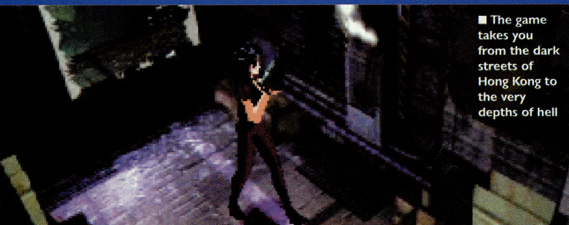
— Blake Fischer

DISTURBING GAME CONCEPTS

The developer behind *Fear Effect*, Kronos, also has the dubious honor of creating one of the strangest games we've ever seen (it's unknown whether the project is still underway, however). The game was called *Vermin*, and in it you played a parasite that chewed through people's nasty internal bits. It was described to us as "*Dig Dug* meets *pus*," and that pretty much nails it. If that's not a million-selling pitch line, we don't know what is.



■ You can auto-target two enemies at once for maximum blasting action



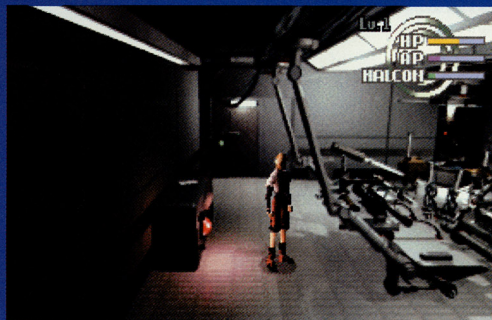
■ The game takes you from the dark streets of Hong Kong to the very depths of hell



■ The fear meter in the corner of the screen tells you how much health you have

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: One of the most exciting and innovative adventures to show up on PlayStation, dragged down only slightly by a few sticky gameplay issues.



■ Although, like many games in the genre, *Galerians* offers a blend of high-tech and Gothic horror, it keeps them more separate than most, offering a different setting almost with each new level

■ PlayStation

Galerians

■ Publisher: **Crave** ■ Developer: **Ascii/Polygon Magic**

Bringing new meaning to "psychic disturbance"

➔ An interesting variation on a theme, *Galerians* puts a slightly different spin on the "survival horror" genre, offering consistently high production values, a thought-provoking story, and solid gameplay. It *does* fall into a few clichés, on all fronts, and has one or two questionable "trouble spots" as well, but overall it moves along so smoothly that it draws you in and doesn't let go.

The game begins with a 14-year-old boy, Rion, waking up in a

research facility where, apparently, he's been the test subject. Initially he has no memory of who he is or why he's there (which is starting to become an overused premise), but between discovering research notes, flashbacks, and conversations with the voice of a little girl calling in his head, his backstory is gradually filled in.

Rion commands a number of different psychic powers, which also exposes him to the dangers of psychic overload. However,

both generating the powers and dealing with their side effects are accomplished by means of a veritable drugstore's worth of pharmaceuticals, and frankly, we can't decide whether the sight of a 14-year-old boy holding a syringe to his neck is neatly subversive or simply disturbing. In any case, it does lend a strange gravity to everything — somehow, when the character you control is a young boy whose only means of protecting himself is through constant self-torture with drugs as he teeters on the brink of pushing himself too hard and frying his brain, "survival horror" takes on a very different

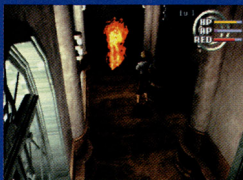
meaning than it does when you control a heavily armed SWAT commando.

As far as the gameplay goes, it's typical of the genre, with 3D characters over 2D pre-rendered backgrounds — and, as usual, this results in the occasional frustrating camera angle, especially during combat. The puzzles are mostly a breeze to get through (Rion can even "scan" for clues, which makes them even easier), so although the game is spread over three discs, it rarely drags, and though it lasts plenty long enough, it's not the endless slog you might expect.

— Jeff Lundrigan



■ The cut scenes are first rate, and go a long way towards keeping the story moving and sustaining the mood



■ Ever want to watch a young kid set people on fire? Then this is the game for you

KEEP YOURSELF BALANCED

One very cool element in *Galerians*' gameplay is that the more Rion uses his psychic powers, the closer he gets towards mental meltdown. A "psychic anger gauge" rises every time he blasts or burns someone, and when it tops out, Rion "shorts" — which causes instant death to any enemies he gets close to (typically, their heads explode, *Scanners*-style), but he's also unable to run, and his health meter steadily drops. The process can only be stopped by popping a drug called Delmetor, which is always in chronically short supply. You really have to pick and choose your battles, or you're quickly in big trouble, giving *Galerians* an element of strategy not often found in this type of game.



NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: When you're finished with *Nemesis*, try something a little different. You'll like this, trust us.

■ PlayStation

Rollcage Stage II

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis** ■ Developer: **ATD**

Every once in a while, we get pleasantly surprised

→ *Wipeout 3* may have been a letdown, but fortunately the sequel to the original *Rollcage* brings back everything we liked about the original, so it wasn't too surprising to pick up *Rollcage Stage II* and, well, immediately start having fun. The second game in the franchise keeps everything the original *Rollcage* had going for it (fast, furious pace) and makes up for all the problems (awkward and confusing at times). This time out, the vehicles control with a fluid precision that changes the entire experience. Within minutes we were flying through levels, and within hours we could spin off walls, flip through the air, and destroy some scenery with a surface-to-air missile, all without losing track of the race.

The main appeal of the title is that very ability to leave the ground and explore the

environment. With enough speed, the vehicles easily drive up walls, career across ceilings, and tear over thin rails. The entire screen spins to maintain the driver's point of view and makes the experience seem that much more realistic. Everything from stalactites to road signs can be targeted, causing blinding explosions that fill the entire screen.

As if just making the racing engine incredible wasn't enough, ATD went overboard with a ton of maps, modes, options, and secrets to unlock. There are a total of 65 levels spread over five new environments, and all of them are terrific. Twenty different vehicles can be outfitted with 24 mayhem-inducing weapons all with their own strengths and weaknesses, making for an infinitely replayable game.

— Daniel Erickson



■ *Rollcage II* is great stuff — fixing the original's problems and offering tons more



NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A wonderful surprise, *Rollcage Stage II* is everything *Wipeout 3* should've been but wasn't.

Deception 3: Dark Delusion

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Tecmo** ■ Developer: **Tecmo**

Continuing the tradition begun with the original *Deception*, *Deception 3* is a gruesome little game. A medieval third-person adventure, it tells the story of Reina, a teenage girl who witnesses the murder of her adopted mother and brother.

Young Reina has a talent for creating and controlling magical traps, which means she can create things like a giant electrified boulder that drops from the ceiling. Successful gaming means finding new traps, combining them to make bigger, better traps (there are over 100 combinations), and using them to dispatch your enemies as

violently as possible.

The result is a gory, strangely enticing blend of puzzle, action, and adventure gaming. There's something peculiarly satisfying about seeing someone stumble into a giant bear trap, get shot with an electrified arrow, and thrown across the screen by a giant, flaming morning star.

Deception 3 isn't for everyone. It's got a morbid premise and a bleak storyline. Also, it limits the number of traps and enemies you can



■ Much like the previous titles in the series, *Deception 3* is dark and gruesome — and quite a bit of fun

interact with at any given time, which leads to slightly redundant play.

— Eric Bratcher

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: This is a creative niche title, worth checking out if you have a strong stomach and want something new.

Die Hard Trilogy 2

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Fox Interactive** ■ Developer: **n-Space**

A perfect example of trying to do everything while accomplishing nothing, *Die Hard Trilogy 2* is a mess of poorly executed gameplay ideas and dated graphics. Like the original, surprisingly good *Die Hard Trilogy*, the game is split into three different types of play: third-person action/adventure, first-person shooting, and driving. Only one of the three is anything other than mediocre.

The prize for "mostly harmless" (rather than night-incompetent) gameplay goes to the first-person mode, which is relatively enjoyable if you use a light gun instead of the

controller. Without a light gun, though, being pulled through a level and pointed at things to shoot quickly loses its appeal. Still, at least this mode has some appeal to lose, which puts it head and shoulders above the action and driving sequences.

The action sequences are plagued by sorting errors so bad as to be almost comical. Every single wall becomes semi-transparent when approached, making the levels impossible to negotiate. The driving mode is simply forgettable, with outdated



■ The ability to see through all walls in the game means never being ambushed again

graphics and no physics engine to speak of. The overall result is a game that amuses for an hour or two, but for all the wrong reasons.

— Daniel Erickson

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Three bad games don't add up to one good one.

Dukes of Hazzard: Racing for Home

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **SouthPeak Interactive** ■ Developer: **Sinister Games**

Dukes of Hazzard is set up much like an episode of the old TV show — it even begins with a CG version of the show's opening and features the voices of the surviving cast members. The rendered movies are surprisingly good. Unfortunately, they're the only good part.

The actual driving falls for a number of reasons, including repetitive tracks and poor handling. Although there are 27 "different" levels in the game, at least half of them are run on the same track. Although it may be "realistic" to criss-cross Hazzard county on the same roads, it sure gets boring fast.

As a rule, the cars handle like Buicks without power steering, and a slight brush with the edge of the track will bounce your car around like a ping-pong ball. Hitting a road sign at 80 mph will stop the General Lee dead in its tracks while the sign stays up. Other problems include clipping issues and poor collision detection — after a crash it's possible to have your car end up stuck in the ground.

If you're a fan, you might enjoy renting this. It isn't terribly



■ Yee haw! At least the Duke boys can still get the General Lee airborne

difficult, and the cut scenes are worth checking out. If the TV show never appeared to you, don't bother.

— Adam Pavlacka

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: A mediocre racing game that survives on the license alone. Barely.

Colony Wars: Red Sun

Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Psygnosis** Developer: **Psygnosis**



■ **The third episode continues the space opera tradition but with slightly better graphics and control**

The *Colony Wars* series has been exceptional since the original, and the third installment, *Red Sun*, continues that tradition. The series was the first on PlayStation to make space combat the kind of fast-

paced thrill ride found in sci-fi movies — the great physics and tight control are welded to epic graphics, and the storylines have also been a strong point.

Red Sun doesn't stray far from the gameplay or structure of the first two games, but there are some key differences that make this the easiest one to get into. The game is very linear, without the branching mission trees or multiple endings of previous titles. Also, things don't get really tough until the very

end of the game, so those turned off by a serious challenge will be able to progress pretty far without getting stumped.

The story puts you in the role of a mercenary who works all sides of the larger *Colony Wars* conflict, which makes it quite unlike the previous games. The space environments are gorgeous, but the land based missions suffer from terrible draw-in and look more like flying underwater than in a planetary atmosphere. — Noah Massey

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: If you've ever dreamed about fighting in an epic space battle, then this is without a doubt the game for you.

Armored Core: Master of Arena

Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Agetec** Developer: **From Software**



■ **Sure, it's visually bland, but the gameplay is decent enough**

Heavy metal returns in a rather explosive fashion with Agetec's 3D shooter *Armored Core: Master of Arena*, providing ample opportunity for mech-based mayhem and destruction.

You accumulate credits by accepting missions, or entering gladiatorial-style combat in the game's arena. During gameplay,

tight D-Pad control enables smooth maneuvering, and the strafing feature (handled by the shoulder buttons) proves an invaluable combat tool. Given that most of the indoor levels consist of sprawling maze-like corridors, the rocket boost option is also a godsend.

You customize your mechs by buying new heads, torsos, generators, boosters, arms, etc., and can tote both hand- and back-mounted weaponry. The quest to build the perfect suit is

ample distraction from the rather straightforward gameplay, and will keep most gamers plugging away even when *Core* becomes a bit of a bore.

Graphically, *Armored Core* looks rather blocky, washed-out, and altogether unremarkable. Indoor exploration becomes problematic, as each corridor looks a lot like every other one. Still, the shooting's the thing, and there's enough of it to make this a fine, if a bit bland, addition to the series. — Greg Orlando

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: The master of mechs loses a little shine with its third edition, but continues to stomp a goodly amount of buttocks.

Ace Combat 3

Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Namco** Developer: **Namco**



■ **The graphics are great, but the gameplay isn't up to par**

The *Ace Combat* series has always attempted to imbue white-knuckled arcade action with elements of more complex flight sims. With *Ace Combat 3* the line blurs more than ever, but with detrimental results. A boring, unfocused story starts the game off, and certain levels

are just too big, requiring you to fly long distances to reach a tight cluster of enemies. Enemies fly evasively very well, but seem loathe to fire at you, even at the highest difficulty level. Most surprisingly, the flight model may actually be too realistic — players weaned on arcade-style flyers will think most of the early level planes fly like bricks. These inadequacies become extremely noticeable a little more than halfway through, when you

unlock the awesome Su-43 Berkut and the whole game finally picks up the pace.

Despite the shortcomings, the game has a few strengths. Each of the 22 planes has a distinct feel, and the missions are pleasantly varied. The graphics deserve special mention, and are as smooth and detailed as you're likely to see on PlayStation. Overall, though, this should be a lot more fun than it is. — Eric Bratcher

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: *Ace Combat 3* has too many arcade elements to be a serious flight sim. Unfortunately, it's also too boring to be a great arcade-style dogfighter.

PlayStation

NASCAR Rumble

Publisher: **EA** Developer: **EA**

Finally, a NASCAR game with right turns...



■ **So it's kinda goofy and not very realistic. It's still worth checking out**



→ If *Vigilante 8* and *Hydro Thunder* had a baby that looked like *Jeff Gordon Racing*, the result would be *NASCAR Rumble*. It's a racing game, but only in the same sense that the WCW resembles Greco-Roman wrestling.

There are 56 vehicles, which, unfortunately, all handle roughly the same. Each is accurately modeled in gorgeous, sponsor-glorifying detail (who knew the Tide box would look so cool on a race car?), but in contrast, the 21 courses look nothing like NASCAR tracks, consisting instead of twisting loops through sleeping cities, across desert badlands, and over the back roads of the deep south, just to name a few.

Gameplay is fast and furious, and the cars are indestructible, which is a blessing considering the available power-ups include shockwaves, tornadoes, and "Big Rumble" collision-enhancing bumpers. A

masterfully done handicapping system keeps almost every race close by adjusting the speed of the pack to match your current speed. (This actually leads to one of our only complaints: when you race with a CPU-controlled teammate, it's nearly impossible for both of you to do well at the same time.)

EA really threw in the kitchen sink. There are nine race modes, ranging from a solo time trial to racing cooperatively with a CPU partner against another human/CPU team. You can adjust the frequency of power-ups, even removing them completely if you so desire. The difficulty levels range from "kid play" to "elite," where the CPU drivers know all the shortcuts and fight you for every inch. Overall, this game shows all the signs of being well designed, painstakingly implemented, and thoroughly playedtest. — Eric Bratcher

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Don't expect an ultra-realistic racing simulation here. It's more like the ultimate NASCAR-licensed version of *Road Rash*. And it's great.



■ Sims are very social creatures, and they always enjoy a good party



■ Sims also have to work on their skills, which means doing things like working out, painting, playing the piano, and reading

■ PC

The Sims

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Maxis**

Live little, live large

With *The Sims*, the developers at Maxis have taken SimCity down to the most micromanagement level imaginable — controlling the life of an individual SimCitizen, or just “Sim” for short. Finding your Sim a job, watching TV, inviting friends over, cooking, and cleaning are all part of the game. It sounds like a really bad idea, but as it turns out, the tiny, banal rituals of day-to-day living in the suburbs provide some of the most compelling gameplay we’ve ever run across.

After choosing a Sim’s individual personality (deciding how outgoing, playful, and nice you want them to be), every Sim has the same set of factors that affect their mood, including hunger, comfort, energy, and how much time they’ve spent with friends. Within a given day, you have to see to it that they’re provided with enough food, sleep, and social interaction to keep them happy, so they can perform well in their jobs and bring home enough money to live on.

It’s the “interaction” part of that equation that gives *The Sims* its heart, as you figure out all the ways you can get the Sim you control to play nice (or not so nice) with the neighbors and keep themselves amused. Sims can meet for parties, sports, or more, um, casual get-togethers, and fall in love, get married, and have children.

On this note, *The Sims* has its





prudish side — men and women can't live together without being married, and only married couples can "give birth." A mosaic of "digital fogging" covers characters who shower or use the bathroom, and the baby-making process is much like the way one describes it to small children: "Sometimes, when a man and a woman love each other very much..." If a married couple continues love-inducing behavior long enough (and we're talking hugs and kisses here — the action menu never pops up with the "Have Sex" choice), it eventually results in the option of having a baby.

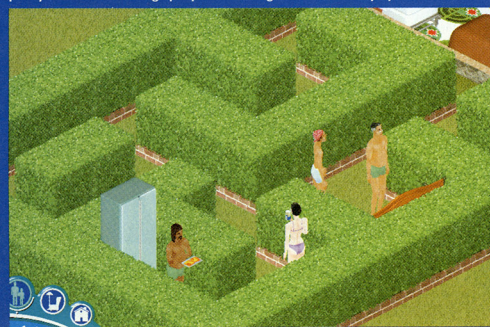
On the other hand, if certain

aspects of *The Sims* are almost comically chaste, the game is otherwise refreshingly broad-minded: for example, gender is practically irrelevant to the kind of relationships allowed, and same-sex couples can still flirt, hug, kiss, fall in love, move in together, and even adopt. Also, the game has no rules against multiple partners, and you're free to marry as many other Sims of the opposite gender as you can successfully woo (provided you can handle jealous reactions from current spouses, of course — things can get complicated very quickly if you're not careful).

Which doesn't mean it's a perfect digital world. To start with, the graphics are isometric and sprite-based, not true 3D.



■ Welcome to "The Friend Factory" — in order to get job promotions, Sims need larger and larger numbers of friends, so you end up creating entire households purely so there are enough people in the neighborhood to cozy up to



SIM TORTURE

Once you've played the "right" way, you can also have fun just dreaming up twisted things to inflict on the Sims. Design a house floored in gravel with no windows, then fill it with eight selfish slobs. Build a pool in the living room (or build one with no ladder for climbing out — they pass out from exhaustion and drown). Put the refrigerator (or the toilet) at the end of an obstacle course of mazes.

■ Happiness is a big screen TV — or an, um, "alternative" relationship, take your pick



There are clearly some good reasons for this, and it gives the game a very clean look, but there are times when the 2D engine slows to a crawl, and waiting for certain animations to end so you can perform a new action is often more than a little frustrating.

As far as gameplay, there are some problems there as well, mostly involving the passage of time and pacing. It's tough not to notice that your Sim spends six or eight hours a day at work and has to sleep for at least eight hours as well, leaving only about eight hours to cram in every other activity. Certain actions take far too long, since even at its lowest setting time flies by far too fast, and it can take tens of minutes of game time to perform such mundane acts as using the toilet. And far too many days are spent doing much the same thing over and over.

Also, although you can invite friends over to your house, there's no real way to visit theirs. Worst of all, Sims never age, and children never grow up — the

idea of guiding successive generations of a family is an attractive and natural one, but simply can't happen. Lastly, once you've bought every piece of high-end furniture and gear, and moved up the career track as far as you can go, you've seen just about all there is to see.

But to call attention to the shortcomings is really an insult to just how impressive and groundbreaking *The Sims* actually is, and the amazing number of elements gotten completely, perfectly right (the nonsensical gibberish they speak never, ever stops being amusing, to name just one small touch). Best of all, the game is designed with a very open architecture, and it's easy to design custom character skins and interior decorations (doubtless one reason why the engine is 2D — to keep that process simple and accessible to as many players as possible). And we can't even begin to imagine what other kinds of hacks enterprising *Sims* addicts will invent over the coming months and years. — Jeff Lundrigan

ENextGen ★★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Do not miss. Run do not walk. And set aside lots of time.

Wall Street Trader 2000

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Interplay** Developer: **Monte Cristo Multimedia**



Wall Street Trader 2000 doesn't have spiffy 3D graphics, but it doesn't need them

If you've ever wanted to play the stock market but never had the cash, this is the game for you. Featuring a minimalist interface, basic point-and-click controls, and a detailed economic model, *Wall Street Trader 2000* is very close to the real thing — except you aren't risking real money.

The real appeal of the game is in the trading and speculation. Although you can simply choose stocks at random based on "feel," you'll likely get burned. To win, you need to "research" stocks. The game has an archive featuring (fictional) news stories from papers, radio, and TV stations, which also appear in "real time" as events happen in the virtual world.

Although the game is challenging, it has an easy learning curve. When you first start, you can only choose from

two investments, and need to prove yourself before being given access to the high-stakes market. There's also an excellent tutorial that outlines everything you need to know, along with a detailed manual. Replay value is high, and like any good strategy game, it's hellishly addictive. In fact, it's easy to lose hours to it.

Visually, the game lacks pizzazz, but it really doesn't need any visual flash. The substance is in the gameplay, and a gaudy front-end would simply distract. — Adam Pavlacka



Bottom Line: We've always said games need to focus on "gameplay over graphics." This one does.

Rally Championship

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **EA** Developer: **Magnetic Fields**



Rally Championship looks good with all of the visual options turned on

Rally racing is a demanding, technical task that's different from your typical arcade racer. Some would go so far as to call rally racing annoying, but for fans of the genre it is the purest form of racing out there. The appeal actually is the high level of skill involved. Rally racing is far from the basic "floor it and hope for

the best" style of gameplay; it requires use of the brake, knowledge of the terrain, and knowledge of the car.

Before the race, you can tweak your gear ratio, tires, suspension, steering, and brakes. This is recommended because something as simple as the right tires can mean the difference between winning and losing. Although this might frustrate beginners, advanced players will love the detail.

Despite the realistic nature of the simulation mode, there are a few details that detract from the

game. The biggest problem is the rigid track edges. It doesn't matter if the side of the track is bordered by a cornfield or a stack of logs: they're equally solid. The cars also seem very lightweight, and flip over easily — and it's weird seeing a race car flip after hitting corn stalks.

Players used to using the keyboard and mouse will find themselves at a disadvantage with *Rally Championship* — the game can be played that way, just not very well. A joystick or steering wheel is pretty much required. — Adam Pavlacka



Bottom Line: Not quite the best rally game out there, but it is definitely a contender.

Shadow Watch

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Red Storm** Developer: **Red Storm**



Every aspect of Shadow Watch is as antiquated as its dated looks

Shadow Watch belongs in 1995. Every aspect of this game reeks of something that you've played on a 486 with 8 megs of RAM. Designed as a strategy/RPG, *Shadow Watch* has role-playing

that's kiddie-pool deep, and sleep-inducing action — it's even turn based.

The premise is that "the corporation" has taken the reins of developing and launching a space station, but bad guys around the world are raising trouble. You lead a team of six operatives and launch covert missions to put them down. Exotic locales are all filled with

cramped, isometric maps and painfully repetitive background music. Role-playing amounts to "A, B, or C" and your decisions have little, if any, impact on the actual course of the campaigns.

On the plus side, it does have a genuine comic book feel, and, um, ran without crashing. Then again, 640x480, 2D graphics won't strain many PCs these days. — Christian A. O'Brien



Bottom Line: Unless you want to trudge through medieval technology and game play, pass right on by *Shadow Watch*. It belongs in the history books.

PC MiG Alley

Publisher: **Interplay** Developer: **Rowan**

Yankin' and bankin' in a retro mold



MiG Alley is a top-notch flying sim in every possible way. An armchair pilot couldn't ask for more



→ It's a rare game that completely captures so many aspects of air power in war: *MiG Alley* has a good bit of something for everyone who's ever enjoyed a combat flight sim. Pop in for just a quick, furious single engagement, or manage a campaign with sorties against all types of targets. Pick the flight you want, or personally lead every flight group.

The results of your current mission have heavy repercussions on the next turn of the campaign. Fail to bomb an airfield, and you'll regret it when the MiGs come swarming. Miss bombing a bridge, and the

UN troops are overrun.

Fortunately, *MiG Alley* is a lot more than a campaign sim, and it's as state of the art as any armchair pilot could want. With the difficulty maxed, our amateur pilot got into irrecoverable spins with the greatest of ease. So, you may want to tweak the flight settings a bit before launch down the runway.

Multiplayer is good and the graphics and sound are both solid and adjustable to the power of your system. Heck, you can even decorate the nose of your plane. Now, we're off to find a Lana Turner picture.

— Christian A. O'Brien



Bottom Line: A fine sim with terrific graphics and a great sense of campaign flow. There's something here for just about everyone.

Gamer's Guide

If we told you there were 650 scores on this spread, would you believe us, or count them?

Welcome to the Gamer's Guide, your insanely popular resource to what's worth buying and what's not even worth a glance. Each month, we update the list with every game we've reviewed since the last

time, and cull out older stuff. Which older stuff? Well, mostly bad PC games, but a few first-generation console titles, too. We leave in just about every title that ever got ★★★★★, though, since they're almost always a good

bet, no matter how old they get. (Although it is worth taking note of which issue it was reviewed in, since time and technology march on, and a game that scored ★★★★★ a couple of years ago might only score ★★★ today.)

title	publisher	rating	#
Dreamcast			
Amnesia	Metro3D	★★★	02/00
Blue Stinger	Acclaim	★★★	11/99
Centipede	Hasbro	★★★	02/00
Chief's Lu Shuck	Acclaim	★★★	02/00
Dynastie Dica 2	Sega (Japan)	09/99	
Evolution	Ubi Soft	★★★	01/00
Expendable	Rage (Japan)	★★★	09/99
F1 World Grand Prix	Vision System	★★★	03/00
Fighting Force 2	Bidos	★★★	03/00
Flag to Flag CART Racing	Sega	★★★	10/99
Frame Grid	From Software (Japan)	★★★	09/99
House of the Dead 2	Sega	★★★	09/99
Hydro Thunder	Sega	★★★★	09/99
King of Fighters	SNK (Japan)	★★★	11/99
Monaco GP	Ubi Soft	★★★	11/99
Mortal Kombat Gold	Midway	★★	10/99
NFL Blitz 2000	Acclaim	★★★	11/99
Pen Pen Trick-Loop	Infogrames	12/99	
Plasma Sword	Capcom	★★★	03/00
Power Stone	Capcom	★★★★★	09/99
Pyronic Force 2012	Acclaim	★★★	01/00
Quarterback Club 2000	Acclaim	★★★	03/00
Ready 2 Rumble	Midway	★★★★	11/99
Re-Volt	Acclaim	★★★★	03/00
Ripper Riders	Sega	★★★	01/00
Sega Bass Fishing	Sega	09/99	
Sega Rally 2	Sega	★★★	09/99
Sega Sports NBA 2K	Sega	★★★	09/99
Sega Sports NFL 2K	Sega	★★★★	09/99
Seventeen Cross Evolution	NBC	03/00	
Slave Zero	Infogrames	01/00	
Speed Devils	Ubi Soft	★★★★	01/00
Sonic Adventure	Sega	★★★★	10/99
Soul Calibur	Nintendo	★★★★★	11/99
Soul Fighter	Red Orb	★	03/00
Suzuki Adventure Extreme Racing	Sega	★	12/99
Test Drive 4	Infogrames	03/00	
TNN/Motoposters Hardcore Heat	ASC Games	★★	12/99
Tony Xtreme Racing	Crave	★★	12/99
Tour Commander	Sega	12/99	
TrickStyle	Acclaim	★★	10/99
Vigilante & Second Offense	Activision	★★	03/00
Virtual Fighter 3rs	Sega	12/99	
VFW On Ontario Tangram	Sega	★★	03/00
WWF Attitude	Acclaim	★★	02/00
Zombie Revenge	Sega	★★	03/00

title	publisher	rating	#
Nintendo 64			
1080° Snowboarding	Nintendo	★★★★★	42
A Bug's Life	Acclaim	09/99	
Aero Gauge	Accl	★★★	03/00
All Star Baseball '99	Acclaim	★★★	43
All Star Baseball 2000	Acclaim	55	
All Star Tennis '99	Ubi Soft	★	10/99
Armormen Project S.W.A.R.M.	Acclaim	★★	02/00
Virtual Fighter 3rs	Sega	12/99	
Automobili Lamborghini 64	Tus	★★	03/00
Barjo-Kazooie	Nintendo	★★★★	43
Battletoads	3DO	51	
Battletoads: Global Assault	3DO	★★★	12/99
Beetle Adventure Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★★	53
Blat Corps	Nintendo	★★	03/00
Body Harvest	Ubi Soft	★★★	48
Bug Bumble	Ubi Soft	★★★	48
Castlevania	Konami	★★★	51
Castlevania: Legacy of Darkness	Konami	03/00	
Cruisin' World	Midway	★★	49
Deadly Arts	Konami	★★	49
Disco King Racing	Nintendo	37	
Duke Kong 64	Nintendo	★★★	12/99
Doon 64	Williams	★★	29
Duke Nukem 64	GT Interactive	★★	09/99
Duke Nukem: Zero Hour	GT Interactive	★★	09/99
Earthworm Jim 3D	Rockstar Games	★	01/00
ECW: Hardcore Revolution	Acclaim	★★	03/00
Extreme-G	Acclaim	★★★	47
F-Zero X	Nintendo	★★★★★	46
HPI: Pole Position 64	Ubi Soft	★★★	36
RFA: Road to the World Cup 64	Electronic Arts	38	
RFA: Soccer 64	Electronic Arts	30	
Fighter's Destiny	Ocean	★★★★	41
Forsaken	Acclaim	43	
Glover	Hasbro Interactive	★★★	40
GoldenEye 64	Konami	★★★★	53
GoldenEye 007	Nintendo	★★★★★	34
GT 64	Infogrames	★★★	47
Heaven	GT Interactive	★★	32
Hot Wheels Turbo Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★	11/99
Hydro Thunder 64	Midway	03/00	
In the Zone 2000	Konami	★★	02/00
International Superstar Soccer	Konami	★★★★★	32
International Superstar Soccer 96	Konami	44	
Jet Force Gemini	Nintendo	★★★	11/99

Ken Griffey Jr.'s Slugfest	Nintendo	★★★★	56
Legion Riders	Legion Riders	★★★	01/00
Place: The Dark Age	Midway	★★	37
Madden 64	Electronic Arts	★★	37
Mario Kart 64	Nintendo	★★★★	30
Mike Piazza's Strike Zone 2	GT Interactive	★	44
Mission: Impossible	Ocean	★★★★	44
Monaco GP Racing Simulation 2	Ubi Soft	★★★★	55
Monster Truck Madness 64	Rockstar	★★	11/99
Mortal Kombat 4	Midway	★★★★	44
NBA in the Zone 64	Ocean	★★★	33
NBA Live 64	Konami	★★★	33
NBA Live 64: NBA on NBC	Midway	★★★	33
NHL Breakaway 99	Acclaim	★★★	50
Nightmare Creatures	Activision	★★★	50
Olympic Hockey '98	Midway	★★★	41
PlexWings 64	Nintendo	★★★★	21
QBC 64	Acclaim	★★★	37
Quake 64	Infogrames	10/99	
Quake 64	Midway	★★★	41
Quest 64	THQ	★★★	41
Rainbow Six	Red Storm Ent.	★★★	43
Rampage World Tour	Midway	★★★	43
Rayman 2	Ubi Soft	★★★★	01/00
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing	Capcom	09/99	
Resident Evil 2	Capcom	09/99	
Robotron 64	Crave Entertainment	★★★	39
Rock: The Robot on Wheels	Ubi Soft	★★★	12/99
Run 2: Extreme Racing USA	Ubi Soft	★★★	49
S.C.A.R.S.	Ubi Soft	50	
San Francisco Rush	Midway Home	★★★★★	33
Shadowgate 64	Kemco	★★★	50
Shadowman	Acclaim	★★★	11/99
Snowboard Kids	Alus	★★★	40
Soul Pain Rally	Acclaim	02/00	
Space Station: Silicon Valley	Take 2	★★★★★	49
Star Fox 64	Nintendo of America	★★★	32
Star Wars Episode I: Racer	Nintendo	★★★	21
Super Mario 64	Nintendo	★★★★★	21
Superman	Thlus	★	10/99
Tenpin	Nintendo	★★★	35
Tonic Trouble	Ubi Soft	★★★	34
Top Gear Rally	Midway	★★★★	37
Top Gear Rally 2	Kemco	★★★★	28
Turk: Dinosaur Hunter	Acclaim	02/00	
Turk: Rage Wars	Acclaim	02/00	
Turk: 2 Seeds of Evil	Acclaim	★★★★★	47
Vigilante 8	Midway	★★★	53
Virtual Chess 64	Thlus	★★★	47
War Gods	Midway	★	31
WaveRace 64	Nintendo	★★★★★	25
Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey	EA	★★★	29
Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey '98	Midway	★★★	39
WCW Mayhem	EA	12/99	
WCW/NWo Revenge	THQ	★★★	48
Wetrix	Ocean	★★★	44
Wipeout: Covert Operations	Koe	01/00	
Wipeout 64	Pygmysoft/Midway	★★★★	48
World Drive Championship	Midway	★★★★	09/99
Westendians 2000	Westendians	10/99	
WWF Attitude	Acclaim	★★★	11/99
Yoshi's Story	Nintendo	★★★★	41
Yuke Yuke Troublemakers	Nintendo	51	
Zelda: Ocarina of Time	Nintendo	★★★★★	48

title	publisher	rating	#
PlayStation			
989 Studios	989 Studios	★★	55
GT Interactive	GT Interactive	★★★★	35
Ace Combat 2	Namco	★★★★	35
Alien: The Heartless	Edios	★★★	52
Alien: The Heartless	Take 2	★★★	56
Alundra	Working Designs	★★★★	38
Ape Escape	SCA	★★★★★	56
Apocalypse	SCA	★★★★★	56
Armored Core	SCA	★★★★	37
Armored Core Project Phantasma	Accl	★★★★	48
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes	3DO	★★★	40
Auto Detective	Electronic Arts	★★★	46
Azure Dreams	Konami	★★★	44
Batman	Infogrames	01/00	
Batman and Robin	Konami	47	
Blat Rally	Pygmysoft	53	
Blatto	SCA	43	
Blood Ray	SCA	44	
Bloody Ray 2	SCA	★★★	56
Bombberman Fantasy Racing	Alus	52	
Boonies	Southpeak Interactive	★★★	49
Brave Fencer Musashi	Square Electronic Arts	★★★	49
Breath of Fire III	Capcom	★★★★	41
Brunswick Circuit Pro Bowling	GT Interactive	★★★	37
Bug Riders	GT Interactive	★★★	37
Burnside Blade	Sony	★★★★★	31
Burnside Blade 2	Sony	★★★★★	31
Butt-A-Grow	989 Studios	★★★	50

Butt-A-Move	Enix	★★★★	41
Butt-A-Move 2	Enix	★★★★	55
Cardinal SYN	SCA	★★	43
Carnage Heart	SCA	★★★★	28
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night	Konami	★★★★★	36
Castrol Honda Superbike Racing	Electronic Arts	★★	09/99
Centipede	Hasbro/Atari	★★★	09/99
Championship Motocross	THQ	★★★★	10/99
Chocobo's Dungeon 2	Square EA	★★★★	37
Chocobo Racing	Square EA	★★★	10/99
Circuit Breakers	Mindscape	★★★★	45
Civilization II	Activision	★★★★★	17
Clock Tower	Accl	★★★★	37
Codemaster Tenka	Pygmysoft	★★★	38
Colony Wars	Pygmysoft	★★★	38
Contender	SCA	★	52
Cool Boarders 4	989 Studios	★★	01/00
Courier Crisis	GT Interactive	★★	37
Crash 2: Cortex Strikes Back	SCA	★★★★	37
Crash Bandicoot: Warped	SCA	★★★★	49
Crash Team Racing	SCA	★★★★★	35
Croc: The Legend of the Goobos	Fox Interactive	★★★	35
Croc 2	Fox Interactive	★★★	35
Cruader No Remorse	Origin	★★★★	29
Dark Omen	Electronic Arts	★★	43
Darkest Conflict	Electronic Arts	★★	34
Dead in the Water	ATC	03/00	
Deal or No Deal	THQ	★★★	37
Deathtrap Dungeon	Edios	★	42
Demolition Racer	Infogrames	★★	11/99
Demolition Racer	THQ	★★★	44
Devil Dice	THQ	★★★★	47
Diablo	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	10/99
Diets: Crash	Virgin Interactive	★★	34
Dragon Ball GT Final Bout	Bandai	★	39
Dungeons	SCA	★★★★	48
Driver	GT Interactive	★★★★	09/99
Driver	KOEI	★★★★	32
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill	GT Interactive	★★★★	48
Elminder	SCA	★★★★	40
Elrzig	Square EA	★★★★	48
Elrzig	Acclaim	★★	35
Elrzig 2	Accl	34	
Elrzig 3	Bidos	★★★	37
Fighting Force	Edios	★★★★	02/00
Fighting Force 2	Bidos	★★★★	02/00
Final Fantasy Tactics	Final Fantasy Tactics	★★★★★	48
Final Fantasy VII	Final Fantasy VII	★★★★★	48
Final Fantasy VII	Square EA	★★★★★	10/99
Final Fantasy VIII	Acclaim	★★★★	49
Frank Thomas Baseball	Acclaim	★★	32
Frogger	Hasbro Interactive	★★	46
G-Police: Weapons of Justice	Pygmysoft	★	09/99
GameDay '97	Sony	★★★★★	27
Get Excite the Gecko	Crysal Dynamics	★★★	42
Ghost in the Shell	THQ	★★★	35
Goal Storm '97	Konami	★★★★	30
Grandstream Saga	THQ	★★	44
Gran Turismo	SCA	★★★★★	40
Grand Theft Auto London 1969	Rockstar	★★★★	56
Granda	SCA	★★★★	52
Guardian's Crusade	Activision	★★★	37
Heart of Darkness	Enix	★★	47
Hot Shots Golf	Konami	★★★★	24
In the Zone 2	Konami	★★	53
In the Zone 99	Konami	★★	53
International Track and Field 2000	GT Interactive	★★★	03/00
Invasion From Beyond	Midway	★★	03/00
Jackie Chan's Stunt Master	Crave	★★	39
Jackie Chan's Stunt Master	Crave	★★	39
Jett Moto	SCA	★★★★	27
Jett Moto 2	SCA	★★★★	27
Jett Moto 3	SCA	★★★★	27
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Jett Moto 81	SCA	★★★★	27
Jett Moto 82	SCA	★★★★	27
Jett Moto 83	SCA	★★★★	27
Jett Moto 84	SCA	★★★★	27

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→ Letters

The Next Gen reader — overwhelmingly mail

→ I know that you have probably been flooded with questions about PS2, and are probably sick of replying the same thing over and over again. But I have a few backwards compatibility questions that I haven't heard or read about in any magazines.

1. Will PS2 get rid of any pop-up or graphical glitches that the original PSX couldn't handle?

2. Will PS2 bypass or speed up the loading times from PSX games?

3. Will the new controller have any use with the more recent analog games for PSX (*Crash Bandicoot 3*, *Spyro 2*)?

Timothy Wilson
timwilson45@hotmail.com

Good questions. In order:

1. In a word, no. While it's true that certain PlayStation emulators (like Bleem!) add features like anti-aliasing, they also use vastly different hardware to run the games through. What provides backward compatibility in PS2 is "a version" of PlayStation hardware on a chip inside, but Sony will only go so far as to say "most" games will even be compatible in the first place. The possibility of enhancements is zero.

2. The DVD-ROM in PlayStation2 is a 4x DVD-ROM, which functions as a 24x CD-ROM, making it 12x faster than the one in the original PlayStation, so, yes, load times will be lessened, although to greater and lesser degrees depending on the actual location of data on

a disk (inelegantly planned discs will still load slower than well designed ones, but will still be faster in most cases). This feature can be turned off, by the way, for games that stream data off the disc and for which a faster load time would be undesirable.

3. Not a chance. If a feature wasn't in the original game code, just popping it into a PlayStation2 won't add anything.

→ I was checking out the wonderful site ign64.com, when I noticed that Nintendo was making *Super Mario 64 II*. Why not make a *Luigi 64*? They made a game for Mario's prehistoric friend Yoshi. They could have made a nice game of having Luigi take on Bowser's seven children while Mario went to save the princess. I was also wondering if you knew if *Super Mario 64 II* was going to at least include Luigi? Going by the title, I'm guessing it won't, or it would be *Super Mario Bros. 64*. They could at least have him in it so I could kill off Mario and use Luigi the whole game.

Dyce
Dyce@PinkFloyd.com

Well, Luigi's story is a familiar one. Feeling forever trapped in his shorter brother's shadow, during the early '90s he began a slow spiral into a nightmare world of trophy girlfriends and substance abuse. There were times when he could sober up and make himself presentable — putting in guest appearances in the *Mario Kart* series, for example — but his earnings from these were quickly lost

to his out-of-control lifestyle. It wasn't until a near-fatal karting accident early last year, which resulted in both his third DUI and an arrest on weapons charges when a loaded Glock was found in the glove compartment, that he finally underwent a court-ordered rehab. Thankfully though, he's been righteously clean and sober since last March.

Indeed, Shigeru Miyamoto has publicly admitted he feels sorry for having given Luigi the short end over the years, and will make sure he has a juicy part in whatever Mario game he designs next. For a time this looked like it would be *Super Mario 64 II* for N64, but sadly, nothing has been heard about the title and it now seems as if that game is unlikely to ever get off the ground, so he'll have to wait for the first Mario title for Dolphin.

And that last paragraph is actually true.

→ I have a problem with your magazine that irks the dickens [sic] out of me. I would expect that a organization [sic] with your stature would avoid having spelling errors in your articles. I have no one specific to blame, but I find them everytime [sic] in a while, and it makes me mad. I figure that with your high powered pc's [sic] that you probably [sic] have at your office, that a spellcheck would be there to fix these devilish [sic] errors. I hope that my next magazine will be spelling perfect!

Matt M.
chewyltuce@hotmail.com

Well, um, thank you for your concern (pot... black... kettle...). We will try to do better in the future. For the record, former Editor in Chief Chris Charla was notorious at *Next Gen* for making last-minute additions to articles and failing to spell check. Also, new Assistant Editor Eric Bratcher is a self-styled "spelling Nazi" and vows to make this magazine as error-free as humanly possible.

Where's the skin?

In NG 02/00, you have an article on a nude patch for *Drakan*. I've gone to the web site, www.surreal-news.com, and I've browsed the whole site. There is no mention of this patch anywhere. So if you could help in the location of this file, I would appreciate it. Thank you, and keep up the good work...

vdogg22
vdogg22@email.msn.com

It's still there, although yes, you do sort of have to hunt for it. Try http://www.surreal-news.com/nude_rynn.htm.

And um, we're always glad to help.

■ DRAKAN



■ The "nude Rynn" patch for *Drakan* is still there, you just have to hunt for it

There were times when he would sober up and make himself presentable — guest appearances in *Mario Kart*, for example

➔ After reading your review of *Gran Turismo 2* in **NG 03/00**, I'd like to share some thoughts. First of all, shedding light on the bugs found in the game was very enlightening. I was considering buying the game but now I'm backing off, and not just because of the bugs. For the life of me, I can't understand why certain cars were included while others weren't. For example, why bother with the Fiat 500R? Why leave out true high-performance dream machines like the Lamborghini Diablo and Testarossa, the Ferrari F50 and 550 Maranello, Mercedes CLK-GTR, McLaren F1 GTR, and the BMW Z3 Roadster, to name a few? More cars aren't better — better cars are better. I'm very disappointed with *GT2*. Maybe they should have called it *GT 1.98.2* (since you can only complete the game that far), or released it as an expansion pack instead of a sequel. At least then I wouldn't lose all the cars in my garage and cash from the original.

John
jemerry@hotmail.com

➔ If the "publisher" of *Gran Turismo 2*, who shall remain nameless, were any kind of publisher whatsoever, they would graciously issue a recall on all of the jacked copies of *Gran Turismo 2*. Then, they could kindly replace the irritatingly buggy version with one that the developer had been allowed to properly fix and complete.

Chris J. Rader
eye4eye@dicksonstreet.com

Well put on both counts. We agree, GT2 was a disappointment on many levels. Although, in all fairness, the bugs have since been addressed. SCEA quietly replaced the original, buggy version with a fixed one after the first batch that were sent to stores before the holidays ran out, and if you pick up a copy now, it should be fine. Anyone with a first-generation set of discs can call the customer service number in the GT2 manual and argue their way into a new one (just tell them it erased your memory card and you lost all your cars).

➔ I'm a new Dreamcast owner and I was wondering if any good first-person shooters are

going to be coming to the platform. I'm a big fan of *Half-Life*, *Unreal*, and *Quake III*, just to name a few. Personally I think Sega should stop concentrating on beat-'em-ups so much. *Blue Stinger*, *Zombie Revenge*, *Expendable*, *Soul Fighter*. I mean geez, haven't they learned to put depth in games? One more question, is *Carrier* more like *Resident Evil* or *Blue Stinger*?

FtpCrash@aol.com

Well, as luck would have it, Sierra announced back in February that Half-Life can be expected to turn up on Dreamcast sometime "this summer." The conversion is being handled by Captivation Digital Laboratories, along with Gearbox Software and input from Half-Life originator Valve. It's also worth mentioning that rumors of a Dreamcast version of Unreal have been around since before the system was ever launched, but to this day, nothing concrete has surfaced.

Also, don't be so hard on Sega — only one of the games you mentioned, *Zombie Revenge*, was actually a Sega title. And if you read the review this issue (page 82), you'll find that *Carrier* is much more like *Resident Evil*.

➔ This letter is to the two AOLers (alex33106@aol.com and borowkaj24@aol.com)

bitching about you guys not previewing enough Dreamcast games. I'd just like to take the time to point out that the title of this magazine is **Next Gen** not **This Gen**. In case they still don't get it let me say it clearly: **Next Generation** means what is coming next, not what's already here. **Next Gen** is spending so much time on PS2 because that is what's next! When Nintendo starts spilling its guts about its next console, you might just see more news about that than PS2. Sega already had its turn, now it's Sony's, then it will be Nintendo's. After Nintendo comes out with its new hardware, we can all sit back and watch them duke it out to see who comes out on top. Then it starts all over and maybe it'll be Sega's turn again, but until then sit down and shut your pie hole!

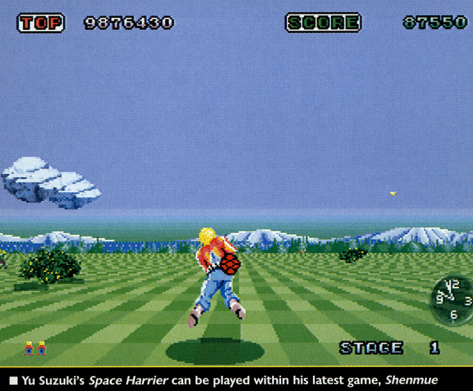
Joe Blow
off_center@hotmail.com

Old graphics, new game

I noticed that on page 64 of **NG 03/00**, on the bottom line of *Shenmue* pictures, (the second from the left), there is a weird picture that doesn't quite fit. It's a picture of someone in a cartoon-like environment with an orange shirt and jeans on, with yellow hair. Is he holding a basketball? Anyway, is that a mistake or is it supposed to be there?

Devon Parks
dbz4me99@hotmail.com

No, it's supposed to be there. It's a picture of *Space Harrier*, Yu Suzuki's arcade classic shooter from 1985. The game is actually playable from within *Shenmue* — you can find the game in the arcade.



■ Yu Suzuki's *Space Harrier* can be played within his latest game, *Shenmue*

I'm very disappointed with GT2. Maybe they should have called it GT1.98.2 (since you can only complete the game that far)

Thank you, Joe. As we said last month, PlayStation2 currently holds the launch limelight, but we've been chasing information on as many Dreamcast games as we can to preview and review, as well as the best titles coming for all viable systems.

➔ I wish Chris Charla a fond farewell, as **NG** is a great magazine and anyone who contributes to it should be given a very honorable discharge when they leave. Best of luck Chris, and as for the rest of you, please try to stay healthy and alive

for heaven's sake!

Jastiger
jastiger@teknhullogy.com

To be perfectly honest, it's almost as if Chris never left — the pile of junk on his desk certainly hasn't gotten any smaller since his departure, anyway (in fact, we have a sneaking suspicion he's still under there somewhere). Still, we're sure he appreciates the sentiment, and we'll pass it along the next time he graces us with his presence in his new capacity as Next Generation's editor at large.



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Note: email is vastly, vastly preferred

→ Retroview

April 1980

Atari: Invincible in the arcades and at home

→ During the year 1980, the coin-op business would generate over 8 billion dollars in revenue, which, at the time, was more than either movies or television were making. And, with the release of several groundbreaking titles such as Williams' *Defender* and Namco's *Pac-Man*, the future only seemed to be getting brighter for the industry.

This success was not lost on Nintendo. The company was still relatively unheard of outside of Japan, and during the year, Chairman Hiroshi Yamauchi would hire Minoru Arakawa, his son-in-law, to create an American subsidiary of Nintendo designed to target the American arcade market.

1980 would also set a benchmark in the console industry, as consumers were now able to play more complex arcade games on their home systems. During January of that year, Atari would release a part of the immensely popular arcade hit *Space Invaders* for the VCS system. Sales for the system would skyrocket



■ *Space Invaders* for the Atari VCS/2600 proved that great arcade experiences could come to home consoles

following the release, the company grossed \$415 million for 1980, doubling the previous year's gross income.

However, not all of Atari's news during the year would be this good. Around the same time, several of Atari's programmers left the company, citing the fact that they did not receive credit for their games. These programmers formed Activision, the first true third-party developer, where game designers received credit on the packaging.

INSIDE SCOOP! COLECO PLANS TO LAUNCH NEW GAME SYSTEM

→ NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

UNSTOPPABLE ATARI!

Space Invaders is a huge success on Atari 2600
Is Pac-Man or Defender next? Details inside...

ACTIVISION EXCLUSIVE:
Ex-Atari guys reveal their first games

PLUS
Pac-Man Patterns: cheating or boring?
We poll members of the "ninth key" club

Arcade ■ Atari ■ Intellivision ■ Odyssey² ■ Bally Home Arcade

What we were playing

You could find us at the roller rink — playing *Pac-Man*

■ PAC-MAN



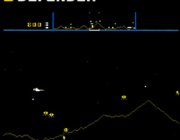
■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Namco

■ FISHING DERBY



■ System: Atari 2600
■ Publisher: Activision

■ DEFENDER



■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Williams

■ BOXING



■ System: Intellivision
■ Publisher: Mattel

■ CENTIPEDE



■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Atari

Top Movies of 1980

Rank	Title	Domestic gross (millions)
1	<i>The Empire Strikes Back</i>	\$290.2
2	<i>Superman 2</i>	\$108.2
3	<i>Nine to Five</i>	\$103.3
4	<i>Strip Crazy</i>	\$101.3
5	<i>Airplane!</i>	\$83.4
6	<i>Coal Miner's Daughter</i>	\$79.9
7	<i>Private Benjamin</i>	\$69.8
8	<i>Smokey and the Bandit 2</i>	\$60.5
9	<i>Ordinary People</i>	\$54.8
10	<i>The Blues Brothers</i>	\$54.2



■ LOOK DAD — NO HAND!

...and in the real world

■ Washington's "dormant" volcano Mount St. Helens erupted on May 18, creating enough ash to fill six gazillion tiny souvenir vials and prompting many expert geologists to respond: "Well, I'll be darned."

■ Post-it notes and the Sony Walkman make their public debuts, along with something called a hard drive from some company named Seagate.

■ Saturday mornings are spent watching *Godzilla*, *Super Globetrotters*, and *Thundarr the Barbarian*.

■ At Lake Placid, N.Y., the Winter Olympics are rocked when a scrappy US hockey team first defeats a powerhouse Russian squad, and later a heavily favored team from Finland, to win the gold medal. At the peak of Cold War tension, this "Miracle on Ice" was viewed as a victory over Communism.

■ On November 21, the whole world finally learned who shot J.R. Today, nobody remembers.

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Vaya con Dios, Chris Chania. Do not go gently into Games insider. Thanks for all your help in this time of transition — turning everything in late, and leaving a wake of debris in your path. (I44 moved his desk, but somehow, his Apple II graveyard remains.) We welcome you to your new position, Procrastinator-at-Large. How else will we be able to get ahold of the Super Mike Bros.? Welcome Brother, your life has ended as you once knew it, and how long are you going to put up this "polite" facade? Mike and Monique — cover heroes. Man speak 2000 — "Why not Gaz, did you forget your ID?" Shout outs to all my English teachers who never broke me of my misusage of I/It's.



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Imagine Mea is armed at people who have a passion. A passion for games. For useless debating over Quake II vs. Unreal Tournament until the wee hours of the morning, and never getting anywhere. For writing funny little text. For refusing to ever, ever be serious, even in the face of lethal deadlines. You get the idea. These are passions we share, and we do our damndest to share them with you. Our goal is to let your passion with the greatest magazines and web sites in the Milky Way galaxy. We love to innovate, we love to have fun, and we love to have a rock-solid rate to deliver killer content to you. We're doing whatever it takes to give you the information you need. With only what, well, even make time to laugh when you least expect it. Thanks for joining us. **Next Gen's** passion for games extends beyond the known universe, what may be impossible if inflation theory proves true. Today's Traction: The lead version of *Gun Trunz 2*, *NHL 2K*, *Dead End*, *Crash Twins*, *Ridge Racer 64*, *The Sims*, *Tron 2*.

Next Generation (ISSN# 1078-9693) is published monthly by Imagine Media, Inc., 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005, USA. Periodicals Class postage paid at Brisbane, CA, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER send changes of address to Next Generation, PO Box 53680, Boulder, CO, 80328-3680. Newsstand distribution is handled by Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: one year (12 issues) U.S.: \$20. Canada: \$34. Foreign: \$44. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST# R 128 220688) CPC Int'l Pub Mail #0781126.